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The ultimate guide to Euro 2024



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THE TEAMS

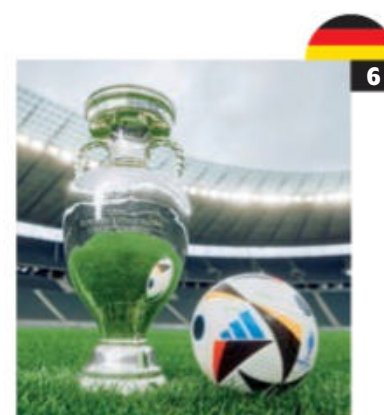
World Soccer's definitive guide to all 24 Euros finalists and their likely squads plus opinions, tactics and profiles from our global network of correspondents



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Germany 2024...there's all to play for at this summer's Euros

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Final venue...Berlin's Olympiastadion plays the perfect backdrop for the European Championship trophy and the tournament's official match ball



"I am very proud to be a Ukrainian, to be of the same blood as those who are now giving their lives for our freedom. We need to talk about it, shout about it every day. This is the only way we can win"

Ukraine midfielder Oleksandr Zinchenko on his war-torn country after they sealed their place at Euro 2024

EURO 2024 SPECIAL



History, they say, doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes. And football is no different.

Three years ago, in our preview of Euro 2020, we admired France's extraordinary strength in depth, and doubted whether anyone could stop their wily manager Didier Deschamps from leading Kylian Mbappe and co. to victory; we questioned if Gareth Southgate was the right man to lead such a talented England squad to silverware; we wondered if Germany could rebuild their reputation after a disastrous World Cup group-stage exit, and if Italy's new manager could revive the team after failing to qualify for the previous global finals; we looked at whether Scotland could win their first major tournament match since Euro '96, and how Ukraine might fare under one of their best-ever players; we asked how Cristiano Ronaldo, Robert Lewandowski and Luka Modric would fare in what would surely be their last-ever European Championship, and pondered how their coaches could get the best out of them.

Now, in this Euro 2024 special, we are asking the same questions once again.

Not that everything is the same. Followers of Ukraine will be quick to point out that although their national team is led by another legendary striker – Serhiy Rebrov instead of his former strike partner Andriy Shevchenko – their circumstances could not be more different. For the team to have even reached the finals against the backdrop of Russia's invasion, forcing them to play all of their qualifying campaign on the road, is a remarkable achievement. How they fare in Germany will be one of the most emotional subplots of this summer's finals.

There are plenty of new faces, too: out of the 24 head coaches, only six – Deschamps, Southgate, Steve Clarke (Scotland), Marco Rossi (Hungary), Kasper Hjulmand (Denmark) and Zlatko Dalic (Croatia) – led their teams at the last Euros in 2021.

More significantly, Georgia will be making their major tournament bow after seeing off Greece in the play-offs, and will be dreaming of recreating some of the magic that saw the Greeks lift the trophy back in 2004. For a team with no tournament experience – this was only the second time they'd even made the play-offs – they do possess a certain



**Emotional...
Ukraine's players
celebrate qualifying
for Euro 2024**

pedigree. Manager Willy Sagnol was in France's squad at Euro 2004, played in the World Cup final two years later and won a host of honours with Bayern Munich. He has at his disposal a young, technically-gifted squad, none more so than Napoli's 23-year-old dribbling ace Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, who has the potential to light up the tournament.

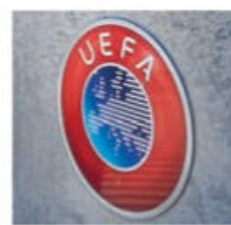
So, of course, do a host of other young stars, from Jeremy Doku, Nico Williams and Xavi Simons to Warren Zaire-Emery, Jamal Musiala and Jude Bellingham – the latter duo, frighteningly, playing at their third major tournament already.

At the other end of the spectrum, Ronaldo, who already possesses almost every European Championship record available to him, will arrive at his sixth finals 20 years after his first. To put his longevity into context, the only other players from that tournament that will be back this summer will be in the dugouts – Sagnol and Switzerland boss Murat



“Some [expressed] a desire to increase the squad size. Others stated their preference to cap the squad size at 23, pointing out the difficulty in training with additional players...and the increased financial burdens”

A UEFA statement on the Euro 2024 national team coaches' opinions over squad sizes for this summer's finals



How Ukraine fare in Germany will be one of the most emotional subplots of this summer's finals

Yakin. It is an extraordinary legacy, but, given Ronaldo's ability to defy the ageing process, it may not end in Germany.

As well as the sight of CR7 leading Portugal, there will also be familiarity in the structure of the tournament: a return to summer football after watching the Qatar World Cup in the winter of 2022, a return to a single-nation host after the city-hopping of Euro 2020, and a return to full stadiums after the COVID-enforced restrictions of three years ago, as well as a continuation of the 24-team format, which fans should now be at ease with in its third edition.

It would, of course, be no surprise if UEFA were exploring the idea of further expansion, given the trend for ever more teams and games. Certainly, 32-team tournaments do make for a neater

format with fewer dead-rubbers, and an underwhelming group stage in Germany will spark a debate. Certainly, the next two hosts (UK & Ireland in 2028 and Italy & Turkey in 2032) could cope with an expansion, so perhaps this summer's competition will be the last of its kind.

Speaking of UEFA, at the time of writing it was expected that, following consultation with coaches, they would allow squads at this summer's finals to increase to 26 players instead of 23. So, as a result, in the following pages you'll find profiles of 624 players, as well as interviews with all 24 coaches, plus the tactics, expectations, facts, stats and stories behind every team, all written by our network of experts from around the continent. Enjoy.

Jamie Evans,
Managing Editor



Contributors

	ADAM WHITE	
	BENCE BOCSAK	
	BRIAN HOMEWOOD	
	DARIUSZ KUROWSKI	
	EMANUEL ROSU	
	EMRE SARIGUL	
	JIM HOLDEN	
	KLAAS-JAN DROPPERT	
	MATT READ	
	NICK BIDWELL	
	OLEG ZADEROVSKY	
	PADDY AGNEW	
	PETERJON CRESSWELL	
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	SAM BECKWITH	
	SAMINDRA KUNTI	
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“



Keir
RADNEDGE
THE INSIDER

The Euros: a global continental championship



UEFA Euro 2024 is European by name and worldwide by reach. Other continents may balk at a popular assessment that Germany is hosting the “World Cup without Brazil and Argentina” but the TV stream is so extensive that some

as UEFA president, privately believes and hopes to see this simplistic view borne out by events in June and July. Meanwhile, Germany’s DFB dreams fervently of recreating the sun-kissed party atmospherics of the 2006 World Cup; fans and media desire

Up for grabs... the iconic Henri Delaunay trophy at the launch of the Euro 2024 match ball

solo for the unified nation after West Germany’s pre-reunification finals of 1988 and its share in last time’s pan-European staging. UEFA rated the German bid as “comfortably [meeting] overall expectations when it comes to political aspects, social responsibility, sustainability and human rights.”

Nine of the host cities welcomed the 2006 World Cup: Berlin, Leipzig, Cologne, Gelsenkirchen, Dortmund, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt and Stuttgart. The additional city is Dusseldorf, a host back in 1988. Munich will see Germany kick off the tournament against Scotland on June 14 with the final in Berlin exactly one month later, on July 14.

The stars of Euro 2024 will be

The stars of Euro 2024 will be building on foundations laid down over the years by the likes of Lev Yashin, Gigi Riva, Franz Beckenbauer, Michel Platini, Marco van Basten, Xavi and Cristiano Ronaldo

South American officials fear for the pull of even their own Copa America, which is running simultaneously.

No doubt Aleksander Ceferin, in what he claims will be his last term

nothing more than a football feast.

Germany beat Turkey, at a UEFA exco vote in September 2018, for hosting rights to the tournament’s 17th staging. This is a first Euros

BOOKS THIS MONTH

building on foundations laid down over the years by the likes of Lev Yashin, Gigi Riva, Franz Beckenbauer, Michel Platini, Marco van Basten, Xavi, Cristiano Ronaldo and many more glorious winners and near-winners. They will also be celebrating the game's reclaimed freedom, after the pandemic-imposed restrictions of Euro 2020, as well as the continued significance of national team football.

The magnetism of the European Championship has been evident at every step of its evolution. As with so many other major sporting extravaganzas, it was a Frenchman – in this case Henri Delaunay – who drove the creation of a European championship amid the momentum that led to the creation of UEFA in the mid-1950s. Hence the trophy bears his name.

France played host to the inaugural finals in 1960 when the Soviet Union defeated Yugoslavia 2-1 after extra-time in the final in the original Parc des Princes in Paris.

Initially the finals were contested between four teams, in two semi-finals, a third-place play-off and the final. In 1980 UEFA welcomed more nations to the party and doubled the complement to eight teams. A further 16 years and England, in 1996, was the first host to boast a 16-team tournament. The event's fast-growing popularity – plus the expansion of UEFA after the fracturing of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – prompted an expansion to 24 teams in 2016 in France.

Euro 2020 was the first tournament to incorporate the newly-founded UEFA Nations League into the qualifying system. The concept was retained in the latest chase for the 23 finals slots alongside Germany, directly seeded as host nation. This provided a "lucky losers" route for Poland, Ukraine and Georgia, the latter of whom are the competition's only newcomers.

We will see the usual set-up: six groups of four teams with the group winners, runners-up and the best four third-placed teams advancing

to the round of 16. The quarter-finals, semi-finals and final will be held over the concluding ten days of competition. No third-place play-off – that was cancelled after 1980.

The strength in depth of European football down the years is illustrated by the fact that ten different nations have triumphed. Top of the table sit Germany and Spain with three successes each; the first German victory was as the former West Germany in 1972. France and Italy have both won twice with the *Azzurri* being reigning champions after edging England on penalties at Wembley in July 2021.

The inaugural European Championship kicked off with 17 entrants when the Soviet Union's Anatoly Ilyin scored an historic first goal on September 28, 1958, in a 3-1 victory over Hungary in Moscow. This time 53 nations – suspended Russia were the only absentees – attacked the qualifying competition.

Obvious favourites came through safely. Belgium, England, France and Portugal as well as Hungary and Romania were all unbeaten in qualifying. Portugal were not just the only team with a 100 per cent

record from their ten qualifiers, but they also conceded the fewest goals (two) and scored the most (36). Inevitably, Cristiano Ronaldo led the scoring for them with ten goals, second only to Belgium's Romelu Lukaku (14).

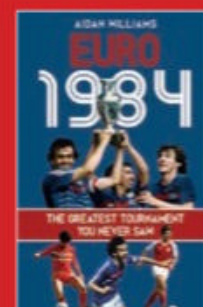
Prize money on offer to the 24 finalists totals €331 million. The distribution system, matching that of Euro 2020, was approved by the UEFA executive committee on the eve of the draw staged in Hamburg last December. All 24 finalists will benefit from a participation fee of €9.25m plus match bonuses of €1m for a win and €500,000 for a draw.

Qualification for the round of 16 will be worth €1.5m, progress to the quarter-finals €2.5m and entry into the semi-finals €4m. The runners-up will receive an additional €5m with the eventual champions being rewarded with an extra €8m. Hence the maximum sum possible for the champions, if they win all three of their group matches, is €28.25m.

But of course, the ultimate glory of raising the Henri Delaunay trophy in Berlin's historic Olympiastadion is beyond price.



Defending champions...Italy lift the European Championship trophy at Wembley in July 2021



EURO 1984

By Aidan Williams
(Pitch Publishing,
£16.99)

Euro 1984: The Greatest Tournament You Never Saw tells the fascinating story of perhaps the greatest European Championship. Largely ignored in the UK due to none of the home nations qualifying, it was a thrilling competition full of attacking football – France's Michel Platini scored a tournament record nine goals – and featured iconic matches, teams and players who contributed to one of the greatest major international tournaments in history.



EURO 88

By Steven Scragg
(Pitch Publishing,
£18.99)

Euro 88: The Football Purists' European Championship delves into the last major international tournament on European soil before Italia '90. It was a finals of rancour and drama blessed by the presence of Marco van Basten, Ruud Gullit, Gianluca Vialli, Igor Belanov, Oleh Protasov, Jurgen Klinsmann, Emilio Butragueno, Preben Elkjaer, Ronnie Whelan and Bryan Robson. It was a tournament that simply had it all.



Up against it

In only their second-ever major tournament, Albania have one of the toughest possible draws

There are two views on Albania's draw for Euro 2024. The first is that the Eagles have been placed in the group of death amongst three European giants – Italy, Spain and Croatia – and that they have slim prospects of qualifying at best. The alternative view, which has been taken by many, is that Albania are not major tournament regulars and the players and fans will savour these three great occasions, in particular the romantic tie against Italy which is home to a lot of the Albanian diaspora.

Albania themselves will arrive at the tournament with a relatively unknown pedigree. The Red and Blacks find themselves in the strange position of qualifying for only their second-ever major international tournament without having exceeded any expectations of them. Sylvinho's side made light work of a favourable route to qualification, with the Brazilian using the games to integrate some notable debutants and to instil his tactical plan.

There is no doubt that Albania will go into this tournament with a more talented squad than they had at Euro 2016 – their only other major finals – where a disciplined and well-organised side were excellently coached through the qualifiers.

There is no doubt that Albania will go into this tournament with a more talented squad than they had at Euro 2016

Nowadays, Albania boasts rising stars playing in some of Europe's best leagues: Kristjan Asllani, for example, is a supremely talented midfielder who has just become a Serie A champion at Internazionale, while Marash Kumbulla and Armando Broja both have incredible potential if they can recapture the form they displayed before their serious injury setbacks.

But despite the star quality dotted around the team, Albania will be relying on talented mavericks to start in the three attacking roles behind the striker. Nedim Bajrami and Myrto Uzuni are

Group of death...
Albania's Euros campaign will begin against holders Italy



both excellent at their best but have struggled for consistency at the highest level, whereas Jasir Asani and Taulant Seferi are slightly different cases, with the wingers brilliant in qualifying and if anything playing above the level they have shown themselves to be capable of at club level.

Elsewhere, Ernest Muci looks to be a fantastic prospect. The 23-year-old forward impressed at Legia Warsaw in Poland and earned a €10 million move to Turkish giants Besiktas in February. He has been utilised mainly as a substitute so far in his international career, but his versatility may see him play a key role in Germany.

If Albania's mavericks do show up and the team can display the defensive solidity they showed in qualifying, then there's every reason to be optimistic.

Wulf MacDonnell

SYLVINHO



In the past you were Roberto Mancini's assistant and part of Brazil's backroom staff under Tite's command. What did you learn from these experiences?

They are two winning managers with different styles. I will never stop being myself and being authentic, but it is a very rich process to learn from the best. Both are great man-managers.

Later you managed Lyon and Corinthians, big clubs in different environments...

I spent practically my entire life at big clubs and I'm used to that environment. Different

environments, yes! Both jobs brought me experience; one was very fast with little time for evaluation, while in the other we managed to finish the league in fifth place with a direct ticket to the Copa Libertadores.

You arrived in Albania in January 2023. How did you immerse yourself in the local football culture?

We came to understand the country's culture in two ways: the first was choosing to live in the capital Tirana and carry out all the work from the federation headquarters. Secondly, it was to understand the profile of the players and travelling to meet them at their clubs, creating a good relationship with them all.



Underdogs...Nedim Bajrami celebrates qualification

What was the key moment in qualifying?
Drawing with the Czech Republic in Prague was a sign that we were on a great path.

In March, you lost to Sweden and Chile in friendlies. Was that a reality check?
No, those were two friendlies that brought us opponents with a different style of play that we hadn't encountered in qualifying. Being able to evaluate the team and test players was indeed the biggest objective.

Albania are in the toughest group at Euro 2024. How do you approach this?
Our group is really strong but, I think that once in the competition, playing against

teams that are favourites for the title isn't bad. Anything can happen in football.

Your first game is against Italy, a culture you and some of your players know well.
It will be against a strong Italy that will defend their title of European champions won under the command of my friend Roberto Mancini. Today, Italy are led by another great coach and they have very good players. We will need to sacrifice a lot, but I trust our players.

Can Albania cause an upset?
Anything can happen in an extraordinary tournament

Learning from the best...Sylvinho as an assistant coach under Roberto Mancini



like this and of such a short duration. It will be an intense month when all teams will put all their energy into achieving their goals on the pitch.

What does it mean for the country to participate in its second Euros?

We in Albania are very happy to participate in this competition and we absolutely deserve it. The qualification campaign, to finish first in the group, was excellent. I feel a sense of pride in people when they say that we are going to play at Euro 2024 in Germany.

Samindra Kunti



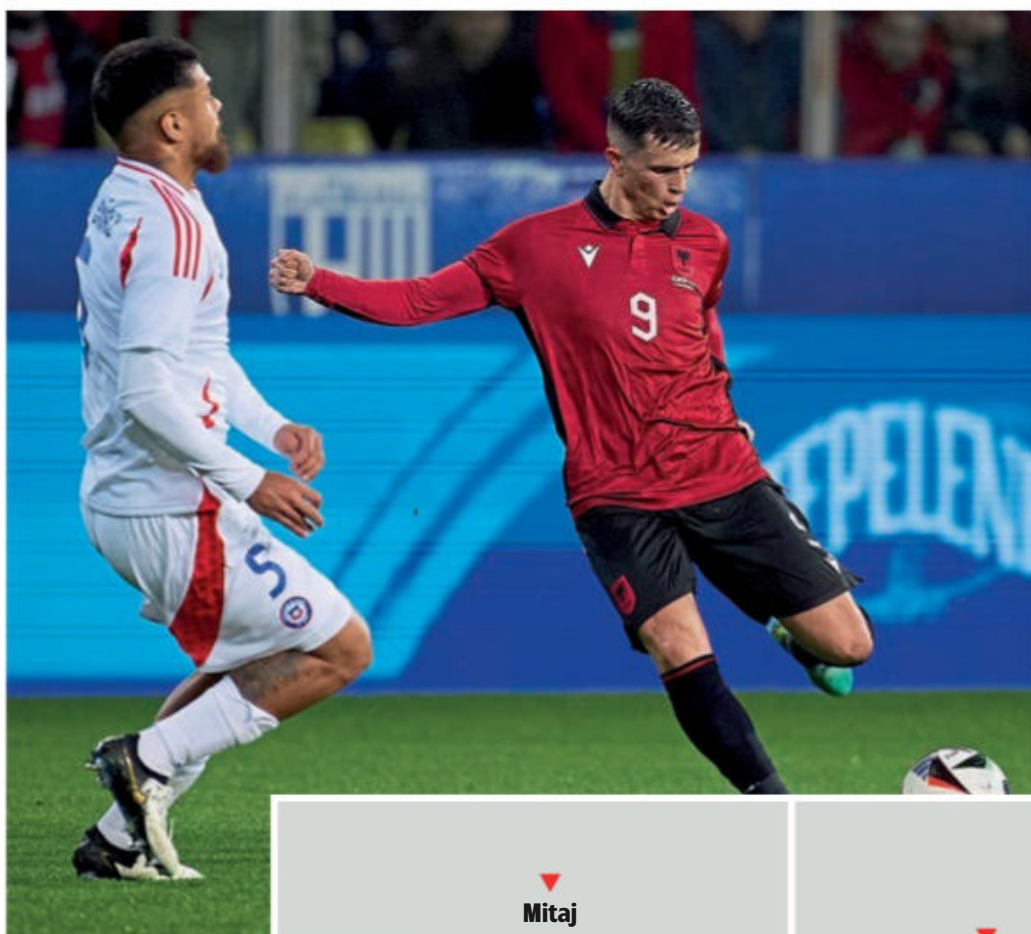
TACTICS

A more expansive style

Albania have long been served well enough by a pragmatic defensive approach, firstly and most successfully by Gianni De Biasi. The Italian guided the nation to Euro 2016, its first-ever major finals, with a rigid 4-3-3 formation that more often than not resembled something closer to 4-5-1. By the time Sylvinho took the reins from Eduardo Reja, Eagles fans were largely fed up with watching their team set up defensively only to end up on the wrong end of narrow defeats anyway.

Sylvinho was aided by Albania being handed a particularly favourable qualifying group. The likes of Moldova, Faroe Islands and a very poor – by their usual standards – Poland side were the perfect opposition for instilling confidence in a new, slightly more expansive style of play. Albania moved largely to a 4-2-3-1 formation using inverted wingers in the form of Jasir Asani and Myrto Uzuni to counteract the lack of a dangerous number nine.

Albania will hope to be able to depend on Armando Broja to showcase the sort of form he displayed for his country pre-ACL injury at the Euros, but don't be surprised to see coach Sylvinho turn to the more workmanlike Sokol Cikalleshi, who played a selfless role at times during qualification.



Inverted winger
...Jasir Asani



Promising forward
...Armando Broja

SCHEDULE

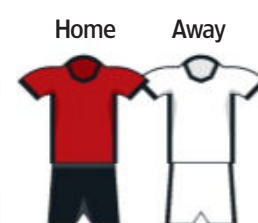
FRIENDLIES

Jun 3
v Liechtenstein
(venue TBC)
Jun 7
v Azerbaijan
(venue TBC)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 15
v Italy
(Dortmund)
Jun 19
v Croatia
(Hamburg)
Jun 24
v Spain
(Dusseldorf)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM ALBANIA



"Today's national team is a good team with players who are playing regularly. Especially with the arrival of coach Sylvinho, the team has changed a lot, and it was no coincidence that we qualified as the first in the group. As for the Euros draw, we are obviously in a difficult group with very strong teams."

Erjon Bogdani, Albania's record scorer



"Albania is a small team with a big heart. The togetherness of the group is the strongest point of the team. We cannot guarantee the success of the team on the pitch, but rest assured we shall win the battle for support and our fans will flood the cities of Germany."

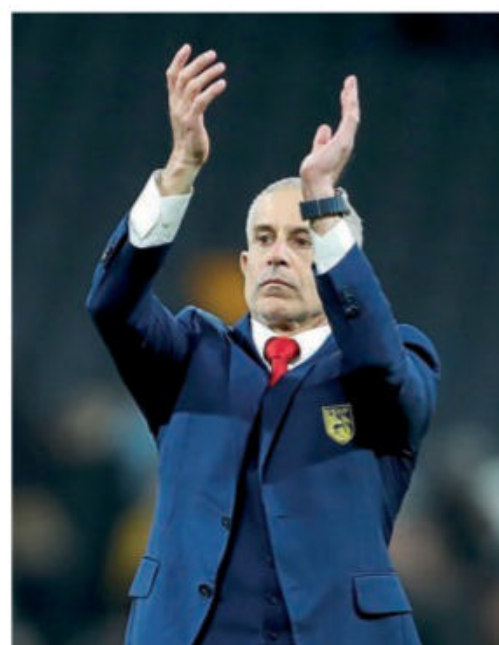
Dritan Shakohoxha, journalist, DigitAlb

COACH

SYLVINHO (Bra)

Age 50 (12.04.74)

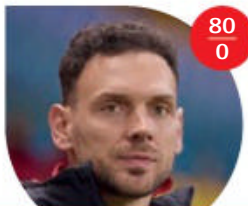
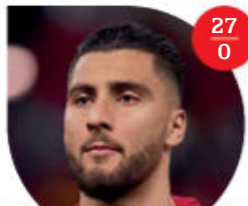
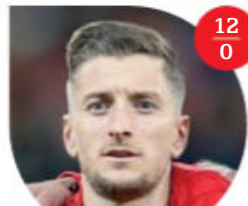
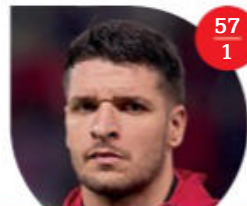
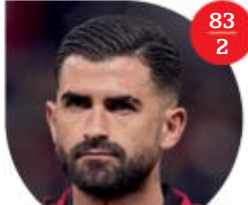
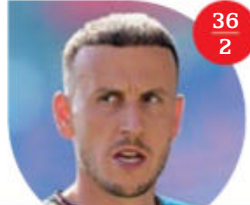
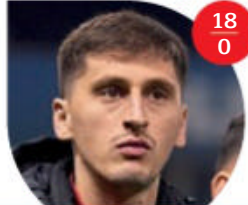
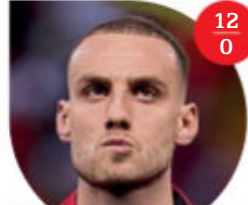
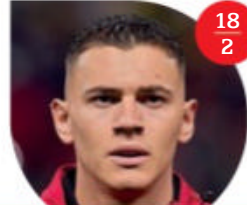
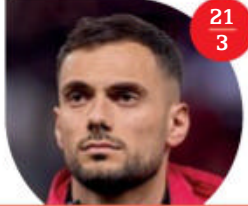
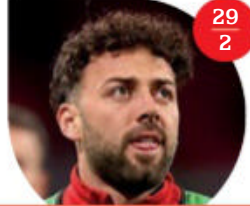
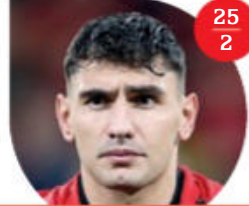
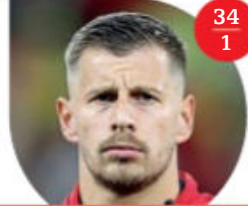
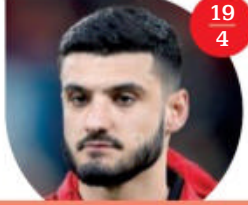
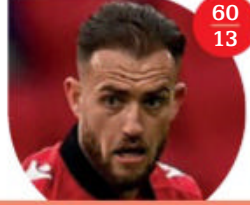
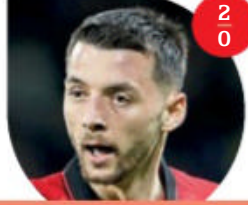
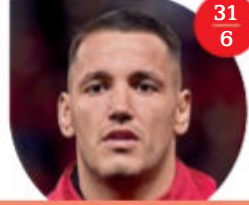
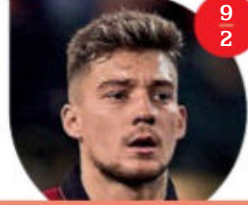
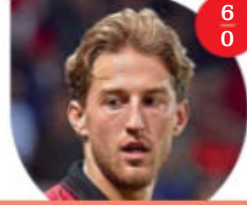
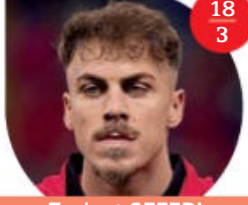
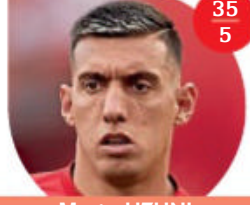
Appointed January 2023



Albania's first-ever non-European manager, Sylvinho brought with him two high-profile assistants in ex-Brazil team-mate Doriva and former Manchester City captain Pablo Zabaleta. His CV includes a short spell at Lyon, where he was dismissed after just 11 games, and a year in Brazil, where despite qualifying Corinthians for the Libertadores he was dismissed just three games into the new campaign. Despite this, Sylvinho has made a good impression in Albania. He has not hidden from big decisions, handing out debuts and trusting talented young players rather than hiding behind the old guard.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Etrit BERISHA Empoli (Ita) Age 35 (10.03.89) Vastly experienced goalkeeper who has spent nearly his entire career in Italy. Expected to be first choice due to Strakosha's lack of minutes at Brentford.	 Elhan KASTRATI Cittadella (Ita) Age 27 (02.02.97) Like Berisha, has spent the majority of his career in Italy. Kept a clean sheet on his international debut against Estonia in 2022. Will be third choice at the finals in Germany.	 Thomas STRAKOSHA Brentford (Eng) Age 29 (19.03.95) Son of the former Albania keeper Foto, Strakosha spent seven years at Lazio between 2015 and 2022. Played three qualifiers, but likely back-up to Berisha.	 Arlind AJETI CFR Cluj (Rou) Age 30 (25.09.93) Journeyman centre-back who has played for a host of clubs in Italy and his birth country Switzerland, as well as Denmark and now Romania. Reliable when called upon.	 Ivan BALLIU Rayo Vallecano (Spa) Age 32 (01.01.92) Born in Catalonia and a graduate of Barcelona's La Masia academy, Balliu qualifies for Albania through his father and will be the second-choice right-back behind Elseid Hysaj.	 Berat DJIMSITI Atalanta (Ita) Age 31 (19.02.93) Swiss youth centre-back who switched to Albania in 2015. Highly rated in Italy and a regular for Atalanta. Played every minute of qualifying after missing the first game injured.
	 Elseid HYSAJ Lazio (Ita) Age 30 (02.02.94) Combative full-back and a key part of the Euro 2016 squad. Plays on the right for his country, but on the left for his club. Four Serie A silver medals, three with Napoli and one with Lazio.	 Ardian ISMAJLI Empoli (Ita) Age 27 (30.09.96) Ismajli formed a strong partnership at the heart of the defence with Djimsiti during qualification and will be vital if Albania are to progress through a tough group.	 Marash KUMBULLA Sassuolo (Ita) Age 24 (08.02.00) Extremely talented centre-back who missed nearly all of qualifying with a cruciate ligament injury. Now on loan at Sassuolo from Roma and should be fit and ready for the Euros.	 Enea MIHAJ Famalicao (Por) Age 25 (05.07.98) Imposing centre-back who has spent his club career in Greece (PAOK and Panetolikos) and Portugal. Defends the penalty area well, but set for a back-up role in Germany.	 Mario MITAJ Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) Age 20 (06.08.03) Greek-born and Albania's second youngest-ever debutant at the age of 17. Broke through at AEK Athens before moving to Russia. Will be first-choice left-back this summer.	 Kristjan ASLLANI Internazionale (Ita) Age 22 (09.03.02) Limited minutes at club level, but Albania's key man in midfield. A versatile player who's wonderfully two-footed and at his best getting the ball in front of the defence.
	 Nedim BAJRAMI Sassuolo (Ita) Age 25 (28.02.99) Pivotal to Albania's attack, the playmaker is an intelligent No.10 who always wants to get on the ball. Scored a belter in the crucial 1-1 draw with Czech Republic in Prague.	 Keidi BARE Espanyol (Spa) Age 26 (28.08.97) A silky defensive midfielder, Bare successfully trialled for Atletico Madrid having come through the ranks at Apollonia in the city of his birth, Fier. Provides cover for Asllani and Ramadani.	 Klaus GJASULA Darmstadt (Ger) Age 34 (14.12.89) Nicknamed "The Gladiator" due to the helmet he used to wear after a head injury and also his aggressive style that led to him breaking the Bundesliga record for yellow cards in a single season.	 Qazim LACI Sparta Prague (Cze) Age 28 (19.01.96) A relentlessly hard worker with an eye for a pass, he has won titles in Greece and the Czech Republic. Will likely be restricted to substitute appearances in Germany this summer.	 Ylber RAMADANI Lecce (Ita) Age 28 (12.04.96) Won the hearts of Aberdeen fans after an excellent 2022-23 campaign. A tireless defensive midfielder who has also played in Kosovo, Denmark and Hungary.	 Jasir ASANI Gwangju FC (Kor) Age 29 (19.05.95) A surprise call-up by Sylvinho, he was Albania's key man in qualifying; the only player to start every game, and scoring against the Czechs, Poland and Moldova.
	 Armando BROJA Fulham (Eng) Age 22 (10.09.01) Had a flying start to his international career before suffering an ACL injury in a friendly for Chelsea. Now trying to re-build on loan at Fulham and could be a difference maker if fully fit.	 Sokol CIKALLESHI Konyaspor (Tur) Age 33 (27.07.90) Far from prolific for his country, but his hold-up play brings others into the game and allows for opportunities to counter-attack. An ever-present during qualifying.	 Arber HOXHA Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) Age 25 (06.10.98) The wildcard call-up for March's friendlies making substitute cameos, the winger switched allegiance from Kosovo after three appearances in 2020-21. Could sneak into the squad.	 Rey MANAJ Sivasspor (Tur) Age 27 (24.02.97) His international career appeared to be winding down, but a prolific campaign in a fantastic season with Sivasspor has thrown Manaj right back into contention.	 Ernest MUCI Besiktas (Tur) Age 23 (19.03.01) Earned a big move to Turkey after excelling in Poland with Legia Warsaw. Made his debut for Tirana at 16. Restricted to cameos in qualifying, but may be a breakout star this summer.	 Arbnor MUCOLLI IFK Gothenburg (Swe) Age 24 (15.09.99) A diminutive, silky left-winger who has become hot property in Scandinavia. Has yet to prove himself on the international stage, but could be given the chance to do so in Germany.
 Taulant SEFERI Baniyas (UAE) Age 27 (15.11.96) The versatile forward is enjoying the form of his career on loan in UAE from Ukraine's Vorskla Poltava. Won two North Macedonia caps before switching to Albania in 2017.	 Myrto UZUNI Granada (Spa) Age 29 (31.05.95) Often used from the bench by Sylvinho, he fired his club to La Liga promotion in 2022-23, scoring 23 goals in 38 games. Vying with Seferi for the left-wing berth.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Alen SHERRI (Egnatia), Simon SIMONI (Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger) DEFENDERS Naser ALIJI (Voluntari, Rou), Adrian BAJRAMI (Benfica, Por), Andi HADROJ (Partizani), Jon MERSINAJ (Lokomotiva, Croatia), Frederic VESELI (Fatih Karagumruk, Tur) MIDFIELDERS Amir ABRASHI (Grasshoppers, Sui), Ermir LENJANI (Schaffhausen, Sui), Odise ROSHI (Sakaryaspor, Tur), Lindon SELAHI (Rijeka, Cro) FORWARDS Marvin CUNI (Frosinone, Ita), Mirlind DAKU (Rubin Kazan, Rus), Anis MEHMETI (Bristol City, Eng), Arbnor MUJA (Samsunspor, Tur), Armando SADIKU (Mohun Bagan, Ind)				



Rangnick's revolution

The former Manchester United boss has been an encouraging appointment for the Austrians

Both Ralf Rangnick and the Austria national team were at low ebbs when, in April 2022, the German was announced as national team head coach, to take charge later that June. Rangnick was enduring a difficult time as caretaker manager of Manchester United while Austria were in a rut after a dismal campaign in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers, which included a 5-2 defeat to Israel and 4-0 thrashing at home to Denmark.

But the marriage has proved a happy one for both parties. Rangnick has revitalised Austria and, even when results have not gone their way, their high-energy performances, always taking the initiative, have won back the public.

In many ways, the Austria role was perfect for Rangnick. Rather like Marcelo Bielsa, Rangnick's career has been notable for the influence he has had on other managers rather than an impressive trophy haul. He thrives when he is given a free reign – and time – to implement his ideas without having to meet unrealistic expectations.

The 65-year-old is generally credited as the architect of the high-pressing game

Key appointment
...Ralf Rangnick



a system that suited them, and Rangnick's arrival has brought exactly that. After a disappointing Nations League performance in 2022 that saw relegation from the top division, his methods took effect as Austria won six of their eight Euro 2024 qualifying matches, including home-and-away against Sweden, and lost only once, to Belgium.

Rangnick has also demonstrated the strength of his personality, persuading the Austrian federation to play two of the qualifiers in Linz rather than at the out-dated Ernst Happel Stadion in Vienna, and showing no

Ralf Rangnick has revitalised Austria, and their high-energy performances have won back the public

widely used in Germany and Austria nowadays, with the likes of Jurgen Klopp, Julian Nagelsmann and Thomas Tuchel all influenced by him to varying degrees.

Austria, meanwhile, have been underachieving for years. Like neighbours Switzerland, they have a talented and experienced squad of players, mostly based in the German Bundesliga, yet they have recently been a shadow of their Alpine neighbours.

Many felt that the players, a number of whom played at Red Bull Salzburg and RB Leipzig where Rangnick was previously sporting director (and also head coach of the latter), just needed

hesitation in suspending three Rapid Vienna players – Marco Grull, Guido Burgstaller and goalkeeper Niklas Hedl – after they were filmed taking part in homophobic chanting following a derby win over city rivals Austria Vienna.

Austria largely exceeded expectations by reaching the last 16 at Euro 2020 and taking Italy to extra-time. Despite the probable absence of key man David Alaba, who suffered a knee injury in December, there is reason to believe they can go further and beyond the second round of a major tournament for the first time since 1954.

Brian Homewood

RALF RANGNICK



Austria is your first international coaching role. How are you feeling?

I'm having a really good time. I also lived and worked in Austria for a while near Salzburg as [Red Bull Salzburg] sporting director. I feel very comfortable and am looking forward to the European Championship in Germany. We want to show that we have a really good team.

What is your target at Euro 2024?

Our aim is to be one of the best, or even the best team, on the pitch at the Euros.



Spot secured... Marcel Sabitzer celebrates scoring the goal against Azerbaijan that qualified Austria for Euro 2024

The Austrian national side should be the team against which it is most difficult to score goals or even create chances... it's no secret that one of our greatest strengths is how the team as a whole reacts when the opponent has the ball.

The 6-1 victory over Turkey in March must be really encouraging, even though it was just a friendly?

It was also a good step that we conceded so little against a team as strong as Turkey. That also gives the team a feeling of what they're capable of. As long as we play like this without the ball, it's very difficult against us, even if some of our key players are missing.

How much will you miss your captain David Alaba if he does not recover from a torn ACL in time for the tournament?

He is our captain and an absolute leader. They were certainly shocked at Real Madrid, but I think our team will miss him more. It's a very bitter loss for us. We showed in the matches against France, Croatia, Germany, Italy and Sweden that we can not only play on equal terms but we can also win. Of course, David was there in most cases, but now we have to show that we can do it without him. The games are on neutral

Captain and leader... defender David Alaba



ground and that's why we have to quickly become a tournament team.

You have a lot of players who are based abroad and doing well. That must be very encouraging?

What I really dread a little bit is, quite honestly, when everyone is fit and we have to cut the squad and I have to tell players in June that there is no place for them. That's not necessarily an enjoyable task, but I prefer it that way rather than not having to think so much.

Brian Homewood



TACTICS

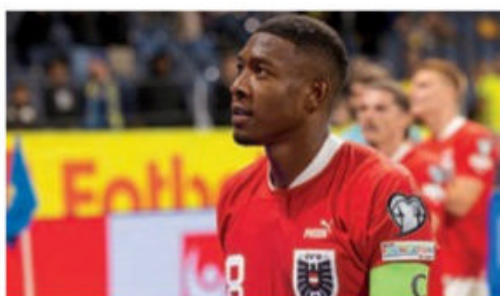
Press masters

It's no surprise that a team managed by Ralf Rangnick, which includes many players who have played under the same coach for their clubs, should play a high-pressing, high-energy game. Austria have been transformed since the safety-first days of Rangnick's predecessor Franco Foda.

David Alaba, who has only a small chance of making the finals, has been a key player. Having previously played at left-back and in midfield, he has moved into central defence where his passing is instrumental in launching attacks. His absence would be a big blow, although it would not be terminal – Austria have accomplished players all over the pitch and versatility is a theme that runs through the squad. If he is ruled out, Kevin Danso, Philipp Lienhart and Maximilian Wober will vie for the two centre-back berths.

Austria are adept at playing through an opposition's midfield and, when they get to the final third of the pitch, they look to create chances by pulling the ball back where there will always be a player arriving in the area for such an opening.

When the opposition have the ball, that is also seen as an opportunity. Austria routinely employ a high press to try to win possession near the opponent's goal – a Rangnick trademark throughout his career.



High-pressing trio...Konrad Laimer, Christoph Baumgartner and Marcel Sabitzer



Injury doubt ...David Alaba

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Serbia**
(h, Vienna)
Jun 8
v **Switzerland**
(a, St Gallen)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 17
v **France**
(Dusseldorf)
Jun 21
v **Poland**
(Berlin)
Jun 25
v **Netherlands**
(Berlin)

KITS

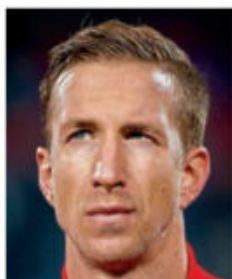


THE VIEW FROM AUSTRIA



"There are now 40 foreign-based players and 15 to 20 play for very good teams. It's a very good team with a lot of quality. You have to achieve something with it. Qualifying with this team is okay, but not difficult. Rangnick has the best material since my generation. You have to achieve something with that."

Hans Krankl, ex-Austria striker and coach



"I'd like to warn that we shouldn't get carried away now. It's a difficult group, so expectations aren't too high. If we make it through, then the euphoria is there. And then anything is possible. Of the possible opponents, this is the toughest draw we could have got."

Marc Janko, ex-Austria forward

COACH

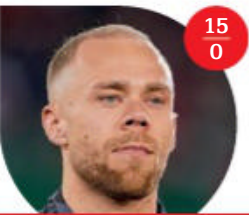
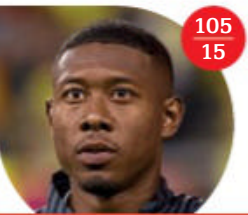
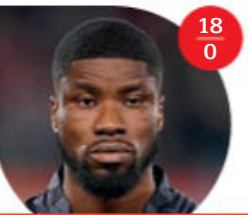
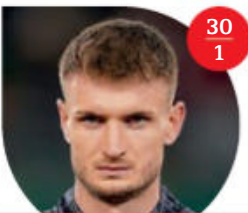
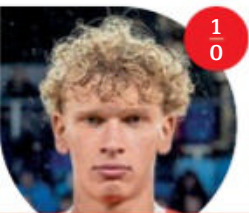
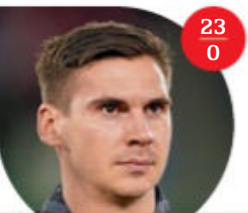
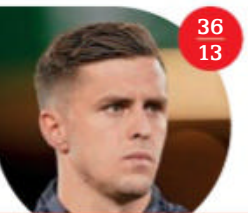
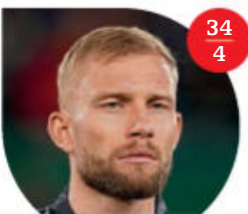
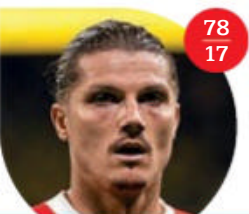
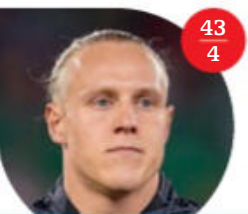
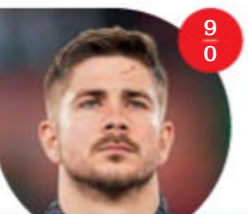
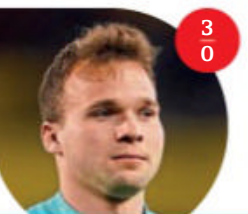
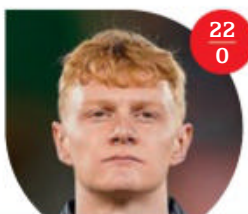
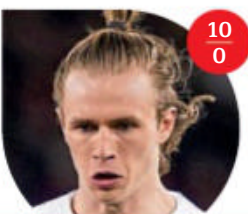
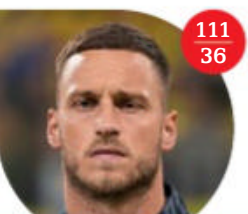
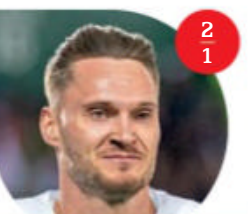
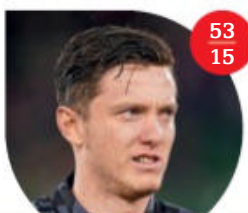
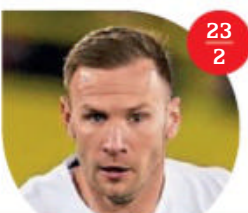


Ralf RANGNICK (Ger)
Age 65 (29.06.58)
Appointed June 2022

Often regarded as the High Priest of *gegenpressing*, Rangnick has influenced a whole generation of his fellow German managers. After a low-profile playing career, he first became noticed when he led Hoffenheim from the third tier to the Bundesliga in successive seasons. He then coached Schalke, leading them to the Champions League semi-finals, but later resigned due to nervous exhaustion. He returned as sporting director of Red Bull Salzburg and played an instrumental role in RB Leipzig's rise to the Bundesliga as both sporting director and coach.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Tobias LAWAL LASK Age 23 (07.06.00) Earned his first call-up in November after impressing during LASK's Europa League campaign. Also eligible to represent Nigeria through his father.	 Patrick PENTZ Brondby (Den) Age 27 (02.01.97) Now on loan in the Danish Superliga after difficult spells at Reims and Bayer Leverkusen. His father Werner, also a goalkeeper, played for a number of clubs in Austria.	 Alexander SCHLAGER Red Bull Salzburg Age 28 (01.02.96) After several years as back-up, Schlager established himself as first choice during the qualifiers. Now back at Salzburg where he started out after six campaigns at LASK.	 David ALABA Real Madrid (Spa) Age 31 (24.06.92) The most successful player in Austrian history in terms of club titles, but in a race to be fit after suffering an ACL injury in December. Will be included if fit.	 Kevin DANSO Lens (Fra) Age 25 (19.09.98) Strong centre-back recalled in 2022 after a four-year absence. Born in Austria to Ghanaian parents and raised in the UK. Named in the 2022-23 Ligue 1 Team of the Year.	 Philipp LIENHART Freiburg (Ger) Age 27 (11.07.96) Now well established at Freiburg after playing just once in four years at Real Madrid. The most-used centre-back in qualifying with six starts, but has had recent injury issues.
	 Philipp MWENE Mainz (Ger) Age 30 (29.01.94) Comfortable in either full-back position or as a wide midfielder, although left-back now seems to be his most regular position. Born to a Kenyan father and Austrian mother.	 Stefan POSCH Bologna (Ita) Age 27 (14.05.97) First-choice right-back also capable of playing in central defence, who is strong in the tackle and good at recovering the ball. Excelled in an impressive Bologna side this campaign.	 Leopold QUERFELD Rapid Vienna Age 20 (20.12.03) Centre-back, composed in possession and a set-piece threat. Joined Rapid's academy at eight and now a first-team regular. May make the squad amid injury uncertainty in central defence.	 Maximilian WOBER Borussia M'gladbach (Ger) Age 26 (04.02.98) Well-travelled central defender or left-back (Rapid Vienna, Ajax, Sevilla, Salzburg and Leeds) who has won the majority of his Austria caps in the last two years.	 Christoph BAUMGARTNER RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 24 (01.08.99) Attacking midfielder who likes to take on opponents. Scored after six seconds against Slovakia in March, and fired Austria to the last 16 at Euro 2020 with the winner v Ukraine.	 Florian GRILLITSCH Hoffenheim (Ger) Age 28 (07.08.95) Imposing holding midfielder who is comfortable on the ball. A regular from 2017 to 2021, but lost confidence after a frustrating season at Ajax. Now rebuilding again at Hoffenheim.
	 Florian KAINZ Cologne (Ger) Age 31 (24.10.92) Creative left-winger or attacking midfielder who is a good dribbler. Had a long spell out of the squad after knee surgery in 2020. Mainly a sub in qualifying, scoring once v Estonia.	 Konrad LAIMER Bayern Munich (Ger) Age 27 (27.05.97) An international since 2019, the right-sided or central midfielder – like fellow midfielders Seiwald and Schlager – was developed in the Red Bull system at Liefering and Salzburg.	 Marcel SABITZER Borussia Dortmund (Ger) Age 30 (17.03.94) Another versatile player who can play in midfield, out wide or behind the striker. Failed to make the grade at Bayern Munich and Manchester United, but key for his country.	 Xaver SCHLAGER RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 26 (28.09.97) The long-time international is a box-to-box midfielder and one of the strongest tacklers in the Bundesliga. Now at RB Leipzig after three impressive years with Wolfsburg.	 Romano SCHMID Werder Bremen (Ger) Age 24 (27.01.00) The midfielder, who came through Sturm Graz's academy and Austria's youth teams, is a late contender for a place after impressing in Germany. One start in qualifying.	 Matthias SEIDL Rapid Vienna Age 23 (24.01.01) The attacking midfielder has made an immediate impression at Rapid this season, making his Austria debut against Sweden in September. Has two footballing brothers.
	 Nicolas SEIWALD RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 23 (04.05.01) Strong-tackling central midfielder who creates chances with intelligent passing and movement. Played every minute in qualifying, where he also filled in at right-back.	 Patrick WIMMER Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 23 (30.05.01) Thrives on the wing and when taking on defenders. Left Austria Vienna for Arminia Bielefeld, but now lacking minutes at Wolfsburg. Likely to be used as an impact sub.	 Junior ADAMU Freiburg (Ger) Age 22 (06.06.01) Another Salzburg/Liefering product, Nigerian-born Adamu is a speedy forward who often makes an impact as a sub. Restricted to brief cameos for his club this season.	 Marko ARNAUTOVIC Internazionale (Ita) Age 35 (19.04.89) Austria's most-capped player and second-top goalscorer is back at Inter (on loan from Bologna) after a spell in China. Could make the squad with Sasa Kalajdzic injured and Karim Onisiwo retired.	 Muhammed CHAM Clermont (Fra) Age 23 (26.09.00) Born in Austria to a Senegalese father and Gambian mother, the attacker has already played club football in Germany, Denmark, Austria and France.	 Maximilian ENTRUP Hartberg Age 26 (15.09.97) A regular goalscorer in his first full season in top-flight football, but still a surprise call-up given his relative inexperience. Netted in the 6-1 win over Turkey in March.
 Michael GREGORITSCH Freiburg (Ger) Age 30 (18.04.94) In the squad since 2016 and has rediscovered his scoring touch since moving to Freiburg after spells at Hamburg, Augsburg and Schalke. Son of Austria Under-21 coach, Werner.	 Andreas WEIMANN West Brom (Eng) Age 32 (05.09.91) Recalled to the squad for the March friendlies, after being overlooked in 2023, and impressed with a goal against Slovakia. Has spent his entire club career in England.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Daniel BACHMANN (Watford, Eng), Niklas HEDL (Rapid Vienna) DEFENDERS Samson BAIDOO (Red Bull Salzburg), Flavius DANILIUC (Red Bull Salzburg), Stefan LAINER (Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger), David SCHNEGG (Sturm Graz), Gernot TRAUNER (Feyenoord, Ned) MIDFIELDERS Marco GRULL (Rapid Vienna), Dejan LJUBICIC (Cologne, Ger), Alexander PRASS (Sturm Graz) FORWARDS Guido BURGSTALLER (Rapid Vienna), Sasa KALAJDZIC (Eintracht Frankfurt, Ger) – injured, Christoph LANG (Rapid Vienna), Manprit SARKARIA (Sturm Graz) – injured				



In between eras

With Belgium's golden generation now ageing or retired, a new-look team is trying to emerge

Belgium will head to Germany with subdued expectations. The 2022 World Cup proved a step too far for a generation of players that perhaps never delivered on its potential. The hype that surrounded the national team in the past decade has been replaced by a more mundane reality: it is a time of transition with a new manager and a younger squad seeking to step out of the shadows of the so-called "Golden Generation."

In Qatar, the Belgians failed to get out of a group with Canada and two eventual semi-finalists, Croatia and Morocco. It was a major indictment of both Roberto Martinez, who overstayed, and a fractured, old team. In many ways, Euro 2020 and a quarter-final exit to Italy should have prompted change, but it didn't and so the calamity in Qatar was predictable. Martinez left, later taking up the Portugal post, and Eden Hazard led a series of international retirements.

Domenico Tedesco, an Italian-German coach with a business-like demeanour, arrived and impressed in his opening two matches: a 3-0 away win against Sweden in Euro 2024 qualifying and a 3-2 friendly victory against Germany in Cologne, a first success on German soil since 1910. Tedesco kept five starters from the fateful goalless draw with Croatia in Doha, but it was a new-look XI, including Wout Faes and Arthur Theate in defence



Youth and experience
...young talents Jeremy Doku and Amadou Onana alongside national team legend Romelu Lukaku

world's best goalkeeper – over the captain's armband. After two serious knee injuries suffered in training for his club Real Madrid, Courtois hasn't played since and is ruled out of the Euros.

With Romelu Lukaku netting 14 goals, it was the fourth qualification campaign in a row that Belgium have gone unbeaten, confirmation that swatting aside lesser opposition doesn't pose any problems for them. Helped by Leandro Trossard, Jeremy Doku and other pacy or creative forwards, Lukaku shouldn't find it difficult finding the back of the net again against fairly modest opposition in Group E this summer en route to the last 16, which will be the bare minimum in terms of ambitions. From there, elite opponents await and much will depend on lodestar

Kevin De Bruyne, absent for much of the qualification campaign. If match fit, the 32-year-old can steer Belgium to higher heights.

Samindra Kunti

It is a time of transition with a new manager and a younger squad seeking to step out of the shadows of the so-called "Golden Generation"

and Amadou Onana and Orel Mangala in midfield. Promising young winger Johan Bakayoko also made his debut.

In qualifying, Belgium never reached the heights of that first half in Cologne again but still cruised through, even if Austria proved a tough nut to crack. Away against Azerbaijan, the team laboured to a narrow win. Then there were the off-the-field issues: at home to Sweden in October, the King Baudouin Stadium went into lockdown after two Swedish supporters were shot dead in Brussels. On top of that, earlier in June, there was a spat between the manager and Thibaut Courtois – arguably the



DOMENICO TEDESCO



What is life like as a national team coach?

I'm proud to be the coach of a fantastic team. We can prepare for matches in a relaxed way, but so few training sessions is a disadvantage. It takes time to learn new things. Liverpool needed two to three years before things started to turn around under Jurgen Klopp, Arsenal did the same under Mikel Arteta. And they work with their players every day.

How do you view your Euro 2024 group?

On paper, we are the favourites, but I've been in football long enough to know that on paper

doesn't always translate to the field. Slovakia only had Portugal ahead of them in qualifying and only lost their two games against Portugal, 1-0 and 3-2. Romania may not be the strong team of many years ago, but they won their group. So we'll see. I saw Ukraine against Italy and they were close to beating them. They are a fantastic team with top players, playing at Chelsea, Arsenal and some still in Ukraine like Heorhiy Sudakov, who will most probably make the next steps very soon to a big club.

How do you rate Belgium's chances?

We are focused on the first game against Slovakia. Step by step. We hope to have a good camp in June before we go to Germany.



Young and old
...veteran defender
Jan Vertonghen and
exciting midfielder
Arthur Vermeeren

The work is done inside the clubs and for the rest we just have to select and structure the information we got from previous camps. I hope that the players will be healthy.

On that, is Kevin De Bruyne's fitness and lack of games this season a worry?
Kevin will always have his spot in the team. He's so good that he doesn't need much time to adapt. It's better to give him time to recover well, and then have him ready for the Euros.

Do you have a selection headache in goal?
Matz Sels did fantastic against England [in March]. He didn't need to prove anything because we knew before that when we

needed him, he was always there. We are really happy that we have that kind of quality. Koen Casteels is another fantastic goalkeeper.

At the other end of the pitch you seem to have a lot of options...
Lukaku always seeks contact with the defender and waits for the ball. He is like a wall and can handle all types of balls, wherever they come from. That was a big strength of ours in qualifying. Batshuayi is more the type of player who times his runs and looks for space between the lines. Openda always looks for the right

moment to go deep with his speed. Having different options is a great asset.

Could counter-attack be Belgium's best weapon against the very top teams?

It is automatically a weapon because we have Jeremy Doku, Romelu Lukaku, Dodi Lukebakio and Johan Bakayoko. It's something that you don't normally need to train because you have it in the DNA. I think we can hurt [teams] a lot but we need to defend better. We have to defend with more intensity.

Samindra Kunti & Jared Tinslay

New look...Tedesco at Belgium's kit launch in March





TACTICS

No more 3-4-3

This team has a distinctly different look from the Roberto Martinez era. Tedesco relies on a back four – rather than the back three that his predecessor persisted with – with veteran defender Jan Vertonghen of Anderlecht serving as anchor.

In central midfield, Amadou Onana is an excellent pivot who screens the defence, which remains the team's Achilles heel. He does so with verve, bringing dynamism to the build-up play that his predecessor Axel Witsel struggled to provide, particularly in the latter stages of his Belgium career.

Further upfield, a fit Kevin De Bruyne can dictate play like no other. His presence lifts Belgium's game and he links up well with marksman striker Romelu Lukaku, who delivers the goals up front with his physicality and hold-up play, but still carries, at times, the reputation of being a flat-track bully. Those misses against both Croatia and Italy will still haunt him.

On the wings, Johan Bakayoko, Jeremy Doku and Dodi Lukebakio provide pace and allow the team to transition quickly, while Leandro Trossard offers intelligence, guile and movement. Tedesco has proven himself tactically astute, often tweaking his line-ups when required. The go-to template is a 4-3-3 that morphs into a 4-4-2 out of possession when the team seeks to press collectively.



Excellent pivot...
Amadou Onana



Still key...Romelu
Lukaku and Kevin
De Bruyne

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 5
v **Montenegro**
(h, Brussels)
Jun 8
v **Luxembourg**
(h, Brussels)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 17
v **Slovakia**
(Frankfurt)
Jun 22
v **Romania**
(Cologne)
Jun 26
v **Ukraine**
(Stuttgart)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM BELGIUM



"Belgium could be an outsider, but not for the title. There is too much instability in defence. There is attacking wealth, pace and variation. Everything will depend on the efficiency of Lukaku, a phenomenon, and the creativity of De Bruyne. You need the best De Bruyne and Lukaku to progress in the tournament."

Tom Boudeweel, VRT



"Expectations for the Red Devils are very different in comparison with the past ten years. Without Kompany, Hazard, Witsel, Alderweireld and Courtois, a place in the quarter-finals would be a huge success. Much will depend on the fitness of De Bruyne, but the defence looks shaky."

Francois Colin, dewitteduivel.com

COACH



Domenico TEDESCO (Ita/Ger)

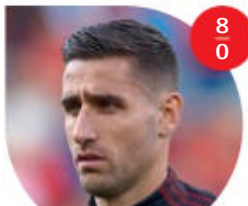
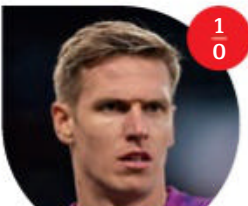
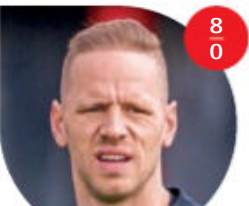
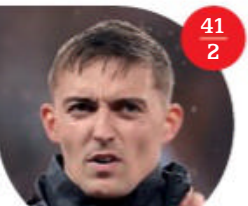
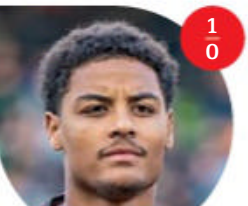
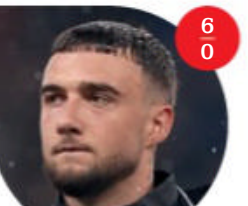
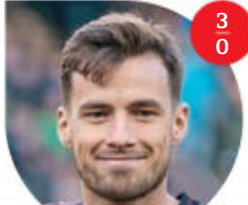
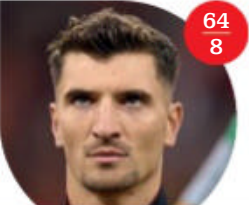
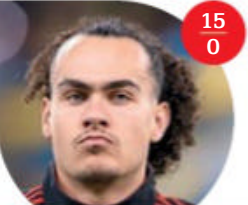
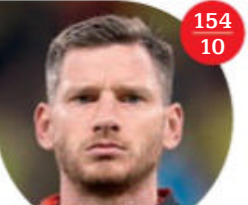
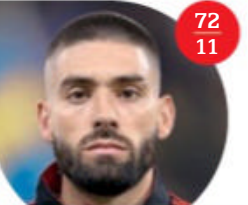
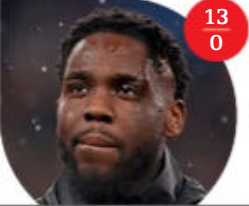
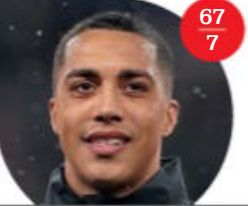
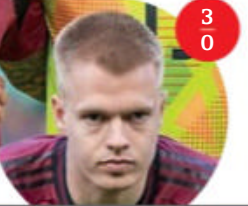
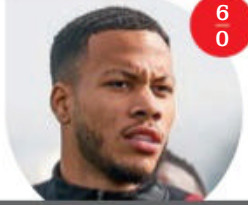
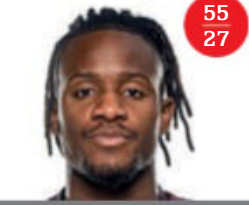
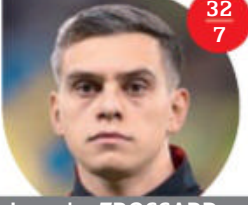
Age 38 (12.09.85)

Appointed February 2023

Tedesco has a more detached style compared with predecessor Roberto Martinez. He was never an elite player and belongs to a generation of modern coaches who use data management and psychology to mould their team's style, often eyeing an energetic brand of football. This is his first role as a national team coach after spells at Schalke, RB Leipzig and Spartak Moscow. With the Red Bull outfit, he won the German Cup in 2022 and reached the semi-finals of the Europa League. In March, the Belgian FA rewarded him with a contract extension until 2026.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 8 0 Koen CASTEELS Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 31 (25.06.92) Twelve seasons in the Bundesliga and club vice-captain, but not as highly rated at home. Secure shot-stopper with decent distribution. Belgium No.1 at last?	 1 0 Thomas KAMINSKI Luton Town (Eng) Age 31 (23.10.92) Excellent in his first Premier League season, but that won't change his position in the pecking order. Previously at Blackburn, Copenhagen, Anorthosis and a host of Belgian clubs.	 8 0 Matz SELS Nottingham Forest (Eng) Age 32 (26.02.92) Impressive transition from Strasbourg to Forest. Started March's friendlies and making a late push to be No.1. First called up in 2015, but didn't make his debut until 2021.	 41 2 Timothy CASTAGNE Fulham (Eng) Age 28 (05.12.95) A No.6 at youth level, but now undisputed right-back who can also play as a wing-back. Consistent and unpretentious with a license to roam.	 1 0 Koni DE WINTER Genoa (Ita) Age 21 (12.06.02) Utility man on loan at Genoa from Juventus. A Tedesco wildcard who got his first call-up in March, making his debut against Republic of Ireland. The latest in a line of "new Kompany's".	 6 0 Zeno DEBAST Anderlecht Age 20 (24.10.03) Back-up centre-back and an unused squad member in Qatar. Excellent partnership with Vertonghen at club level. Reliable passer and energetic, but yet to explode.	
	 3 0 Olivier DEMAN Werder Bremen (Ger) Age 24 (06.04.00) Former U21 international, the Bundesliga left wing-back is Theate's deputy for Belgium. Debuted last summer against Estonia and has a penchant for high-intensity runs.	 13 0 Wout FAES Leicester City (Eng) Age 26 (03.04.98) Matured in Reims before joining Leicester. Singled out by Belgium supporters following some errors, but his place is cemented. Won bronze at the 2015 Under-17 World Cup.	 64 8 Thomas MEUNIER Trabzonspor (Tur) Age 32 (12.09.91) Now in Turkey via Paris and Dortmund. Reliable and industrious right-back who is making a late surge for inclusion in the Euro squad. An art lover and former postman.	DEFENDERS	 15 0 Arthur THEATE Rennes (Fra) Age 24 (25.05.00) Undisputed in central defence in Ligue 1 for his club, but a makeshift left-back for his country. Like Castagne and Faes, he started every qualifier. Physical but not always refined.	 154 10 Jan VERTONGHEN Anderlecht Age 37 (24.04.87) Belgium's most-capped player and the anchor of the backline. Spirited renaissance at club level, the experienced left-footed centre-back is in the twilight of his career.	 72 11 Yannick CARRASCO Al Shabab (KSA) Age 30 (04.09.93) A Tedesco favourite, he is very versatile and talented but doesn't always deliver an end product. Criticised after a controversial move to the Middle East.
	 99 26 Kevin DE BRUYNE Manchester City (Eng) Age 32 (28.06.91) A season punctuated by injuries. Superlative midfielder with vision and passing that defy logic. Captain with assertive attitude. Arguably the best player in Belgian history.	 14 2 Charles DE KETELAERE Atalanta (Ita) Age 23 (10.03.01) Attacking midfielder with huge potential enjoying a rejuvenation on loan at Atalanta from Milan. Gossamer touch and simplicity, he links well with De Bruyne, but is no easy fit in Tedesco's 4-3-3.	 13 0 Orel MANGALA Lyon (Fra) Age 26 (18.03.98) Debuted against Republic of Ireland in 2022. Good ball retention and applies a touch of risk. Can play both the No.6 and No.8 roles. On loan in Ligue 1 from Nottingham Forest.		 11 0 Amadou ONANA Everton (Eng) Age 22 (16.08.01) A mainstay under Tedesco and reportedly on the radar of top clubs. He protects the defence, delivers physicality and builds up play well. Previously at Hamburg and Lille.	 67 7 Youri TIELEMANS Aston Villa (Eng) Age 27 (07.05.97) Not first-choice for club or country, but still has an abundance of natural talent. Great skill on his day with a thumping shot, and could push Carrasco hard to start in midfield.	 3 0 Arthur VERMEEREN Atletico Madrid (Spa) Age 19 (07.02.05) Deep-lying playmaker and the new boy wonder of Belgian football who needs to find his feet in Spain. Possesses intelligence, maturity and stamina, and sees things others don't.
FORWARDS	 6 0 Aster VRANCKX Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 21 (04.10.02) One of three Wolfsburg players in the national team set-up and part of the Vermeeren generation. Unsuccessful loan spell at Milan. Lacks playing time, but a good all-rounder.	 10 1 Johan BAKAYOKO PSV (Ned) Age 21 (20.04.03) Breakout season with debuts in the Champions League and European qualifiers. Shuttling, creative right-winger with a decent cross. Not yet polished, but full of confidence.	 55 27 Michy BATSHUAYI Fenerbahce (Tur) Age 30 (02.10.93) Hardly ever a first choice, the role of super sub suits him well with his excellent strike rate. Formerly of Standard Liege, Marseille and Chelsea, this will be his fifth major finals.		 20 2 Jeremy DOKU Manchester City (Eng) Age 22 (27.05.02) First capped in 2020, but burst fully onto the scene a year later against Italy at Euro 2020. Now blending in at City, step by step, he is an agent of chaos with his speed and dribbles.	 114 83 Romelu LUKAKU Roma (Ita) Age 31 (13.05.93) A force of nature with 14 goals in qualifying and Belgium's all-time top scorer. A vice-captain, the powerhouse striker needs to deliver more against elite opponents.	 14 2 Dodi LUKEBAKIO Sevilla (Spa) Age 26 (24.09.97) Journeyman now at home in Spain where a knee injury derailed his season. Still maturing, but very agile and fast on either flank. Played for DR Congo as a teenager.
	 16 2 Lois OPENDA RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 24 (16.02.00) Consistent goalscorer. Overlooked by Club Brugge, but a fans' favourite at Lens and now Leipzig with more than 20 goals a season for each. Featured in Qatar as a sub.	 32 7 Leandro TROSSARD Arsenal (Eng) Age 29 (04.12.94) A versatile forward with a penchant for producing clutch moments and making an impact off the bench. Cool finisher and skilful with a suave touch. Previously at Genk and Brighton.					
	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Arnaud BODART (Standard Liege), Thibaut COURTOIS (Real Madrid, Spa) – <i>injured</i> DEFENDERS Ameen AL DAKHIL (Burnley, Eng), Sebastiaan BORNAUW (Wolfsburg, Ger), Maxim DE CUYPER (Club Brugge), Hugo SIQUET (Cercle Brugge), Jorne SPILEERS (Club Brugge), Zinho VANHEUSDEN (Standard Liege) MIDFIELDERS Alessio CASTRO-MONTES (Union Saint-Gilloise), Leander DENDONCKER (Napoli, Ita), Thorgan HAZARD (Anderlecht), Mandela KEITA (Antwerp), Romeo LAVIA (Chelsea, Eng), Dennis PRAET (Leicester City, Eng), Alexis SAELEMAEKERS (Bologna, Ita), Mario STROEYKENS (Anderlecht), Hans VANAKEN (Club Brugge) FORWARDS Malick FOFANA (Lyon, Fra), Mike TRESOR (Burnley)						

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Arnaud BODART (Standard Liege), Thibaut COURTOIS (Real Madrid, Spa) – injured

DEFENDERS

Ameen AL DAKHIL (Burnley, Eng), Sebastiaan BORNAUW (Wolfsburg, Ger), Maxim DE CUYPER (Club Brugge), Hugo SIQUET (Cercle Brugge), Jorne SPILEERS (Club Brugge), Zinho VANHEUSDEN (Standard Liege)

MIDFIELDERS

Alessio CASTRO-MONTES (Union Saint-Gilloise), Leander DENDONCKER (Napoli, Ita), Thorgan HAZARD (Anderlecht), Mandela KEITA (Antwerp), Romeo LAVIA (Chelsea, Eng), Dennis PRAET (Leicester City, Eng), Alexis SAELEMAEKERS (Bologna, Ita), Mario STROEYKENS (Anderlecht), Hans VANAKEN (Club Brugge)

FORWARDS

Malick FOFANA (Lyon, Fra), Mike TRESOR (Burnley)



This time?

Croatia's national heroes are finally hoping to translate their World Cup form to the Euros

There is probably no other national team in Europe that treats its players like saints in the way that Croatia does. And, after their heroics over the last six years, they deserve it: finishing runners-up at the 2018 World Cup in Russia and third in Qatar four years later, as well as reaching the final of the 2022-23 Nations League when they were denied by Spain on penalties.

During that six-year spell, the only tournament in which they did not excel was Euro 2020. After a couple of turgid group-stage displays, they beat Scotland 3-1 to progress to the last 16 where, foreshadowing that Nations League final defeat, they lost to Spain.

To date, Croatia have never particularly excelled at a European Championship, with that defeat extending their winless run in the knockout stages of the finals. Since their first appearance, in England at Euro '96, they have advanced from their group four times, but always fallen at the next hurdle (twice in extra-time and once on penalties). This time, however, confidence is high that Croatia can finally win a place on the Euros podium.

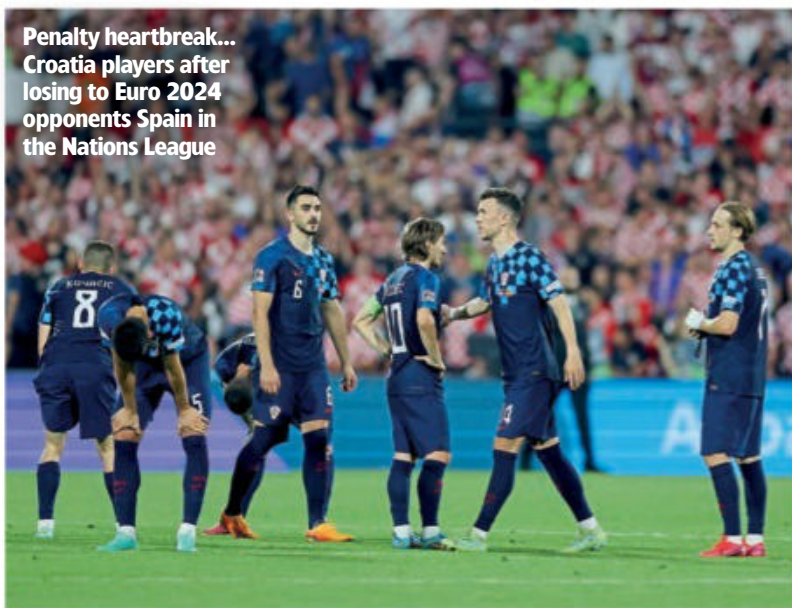
Head coach Zlatko Dalic has built a homogeneous squad that combines experience and youth. Up to nine players that appeared in Russia could still make the squad this summer, alongside a solid supporting cast that have earned vital experience in Qatar and during the 2023 Nations League finals in the Netherlands.

This time, confidence is high that Croatia can finally win a place on the Euros podium

With a population just shy of four million, Croatia does not have a huge player base, so Dalic's main concern is ensuring that each player arrives fit and unscathed from their club seasons. Currently, the biggest concern relates to Ivan Perisic, one of the icons of recent Croatian football. Perisic injured his right knee in September, and joined Hajduk Split from Tottenham Hotspur in January in order to rebuild his fitness in a less strenuous environment. The winger made his return off the bench in early April, but still faces a race to be ready for the Euros.

Perisic's absence would be a big blow, but Croatia have genuine team spirit

Penalty heartbreak... Croatia players after losing to Euro 2024 opponents Spain in the Nations League



derived from a strong sense of patriotism, which has been a feature of the team ever since its separation from former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. It's why Croatian supporters – united under the motto "Always faithful" – are so devoted to their players and, given that Germany is home to numerous Croat emigrants, a huge following is expected for their first match against Spain in Berlin.

Dalic also deserves great credit for fostering that spirit, creating a sense of unity among a group of hugely-talented players. This is best exemplified by his captain, Luka Modric, a unique figure among the players and the true leader of the team. Even at 38, he still fights for the jersey and his place in the team. He would like nothing better than to lead Croatia to yet another new feat and thus conclude his national team career on a high.

Zdravko Reic

ZLATKO DALIC



How do you reflect on the last six years?

Since 2018, we have achieved fantastic results, with silver and bronze medals from the past two World Cups as well as silver in the Nations League. These results sometimes seem unreal. I personally believe that the Croatia national team should always qualify for the final tournaments, whether that's the World Cup, Euros or Nations League. That should be a threshold below which we should not fall.

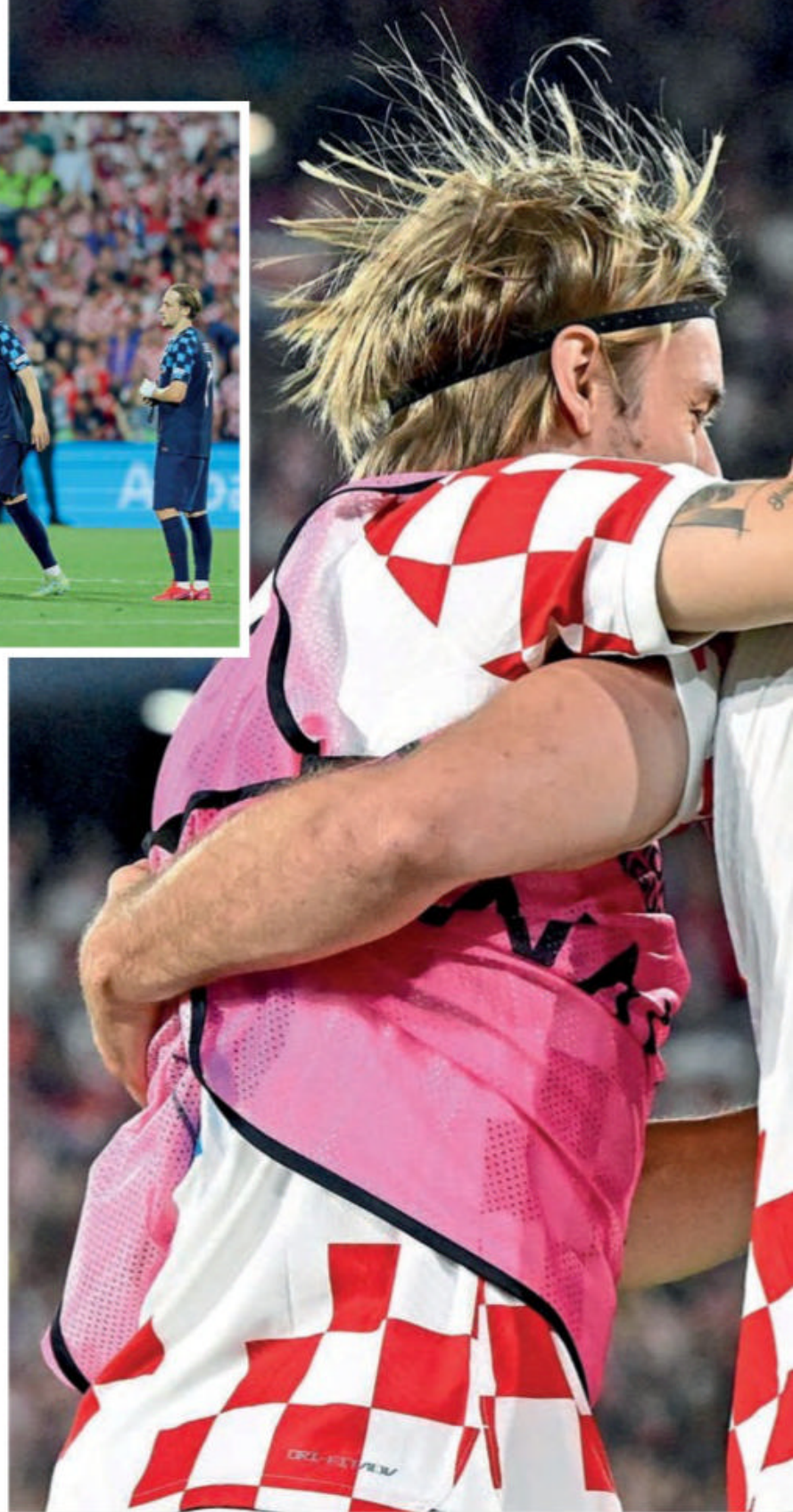
What are your objectives for Euro 2024?

Realistically, our group is the most difficult.

We are with Italy, the current European champions, Spain, winners of the Nations League, and the big surprise of the qualifiers, Albania, who will be motivated and full of energy. And we were third in the world in 2022, and second in the Nations League in 2023. Our goal is to pass the group stage.

How important will your fans be?

We are a small country, with clubs and a league that cannot compete with the highest ranks. However, we have players at big clubs in all of the strongest leagues who are inspired by the love and support of our fans. In the Nations League final in Rotterdam, we were cheered on by a crowd of 35,000. We will





Croatia icon...Luka Modric celebrates during last summer's Nations League finals

also enjoy a lot of support in Germany. This interest creates great responsibility, because our football team has probably become the biggest brand of the Croatian nationality. We are ready to represent the values of our people.

What is your biggest preoccupation ahead of the European Championship?

It is very important for us that we are not affected by injuries. Currently, Ivan Perisic is in the rehabilitation phase, which is of crucial importance due to his versatility and quality. Now he only occasionally plays for Hajduk, and I follow his every appearance with great stress. I also follow Marcelo Brozovic's games in Saudi Arabia with great interest, because

they don't play top-level football there. But the most important thing is that Luka Modric does not arrive worn out.

Tell us about Luka Modric's genius...

Luka is my right-hand man on the pitch, and we depend very much on his quality. He sees and feels everything on the pitch and, most importantly, he always sees the right option. He's superior [to others] in every possible way: tactically, technically and in terms of the ground he covers. He's got an enviable technique. He always has a solution and sees what other players don't see. I believe you

Captain and coach ...Modric and Dalic discuss tactics



cannot find a single flaw in Luka's game. You can only praise him. He's footballing perfection. In that regard, we must be grateful that he is still playing.

And what about your own future?

I have a contract until 2026, but I will step down if I feel that I am no longer inspired, capable, motivated or ready for the job. But in this moment, that is not the case. I have never felt so motivated, I have never been stronger, and that mood of mine has spilled over to our players. My focus is on Euro 2024, to once again achieve a result that will delight our people and nation.

Zdravko Reic & Samindra Kunti



TACTICS

Masterful midfield

The backbone of Dalic's team is the experienced midfield trio of Luka Modric, Marcelo Brozovic and Mateo Kovacic, with whom Croatia try to boss possession, although they are also wily and streetwise without the ball. In this set-up, the contribution of the full-backs – Josip Juranovic or Josip Stanisic and Borna Sosa – is even more significant, because they are simultaneously tasked with assisting midfield domination and getting forward to supply crosses.

Ivan Perisic's readiness for the Euros is of huge concern but, in his absence, Luka Ivanusec has ably deputised on the left wing.

Up front, none of the options are prolific. Ante Budimir is a sharp figurehead and is enjoying his best-ever goalscoring season with Osasuna, but has yet to replicate that form for Croatia. Bruno Petkovic provides a different option; not a classic No.9, he knows when to drop deep and open up space for Andrej Kramaric to capitalise. A third option is for Kramaric himself to play up top – in which case Lovro Majer, Nikola Vlasic or Mario Pasalic would come in on the right – but all four of his qualifying goals came when starting out wide or as a No.10.

In every case, Modric is the commander-in-chief and mastermind of the team who serves and directs attacks with his creativity.



Commander-in-chief...Luka Modric



Fitness race... Ivan Perisic

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 3 v
North Macedonia
(h, Rijeka)
Jun 8
v **Portugal**
(a, Lisbon)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 15
v **Spain**
(Berlin)
Jun 19
v **Albania**
(Hamburg)
Jun 24
v **Italy**
(Leipzig)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM CROATIA



"Croatia are no longer a surprise in the football world. Ever since 1996, we can stand next to the strongest football nations with regards to appearances in the final tournaments of the Euros and World Cups. I am eagerly looking forward to seeing the team perform; our group is one of the toughest."
Slaven Bilic, ex-Croatia defender and coach



"This is the last dance for the players that won silver in Russia 2018. Everyone hopes that Luka Modric will play another tournament in his masterful way. It is important that we are complete and that Ivan Perisic gets fit as soon as possible."
Drazen Muzinic, ex-Hajduk Split and Yugoslavia midfielder



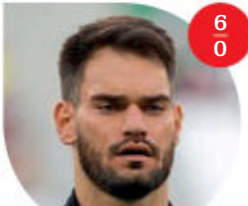
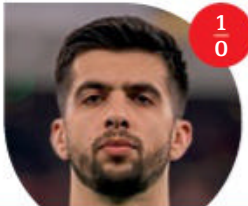
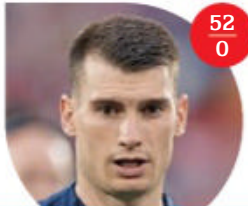
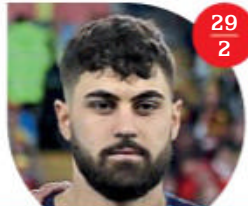
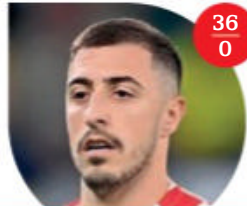
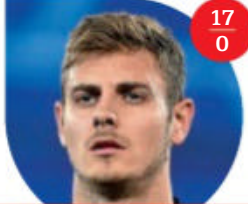
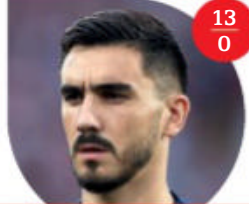
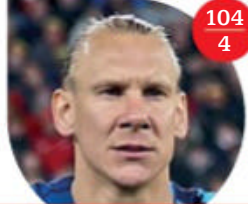
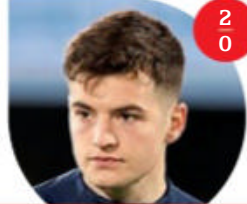
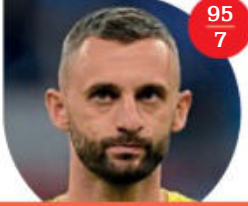
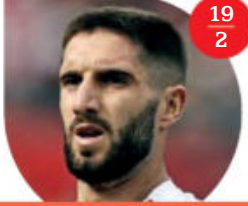
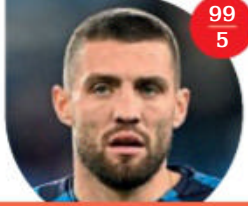
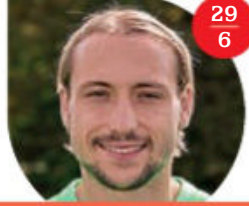
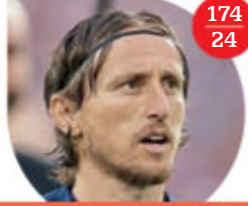
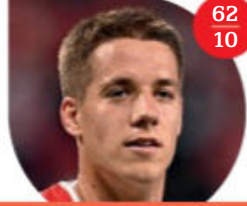
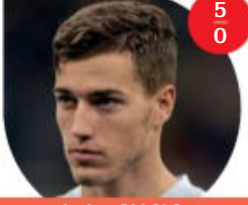
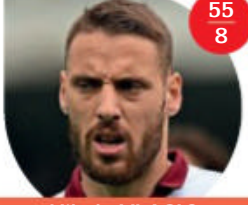
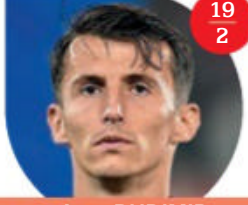
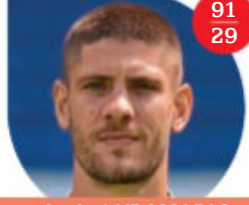
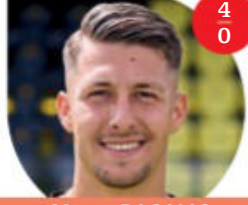
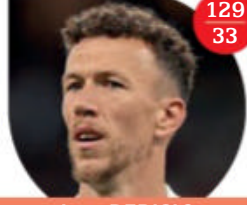
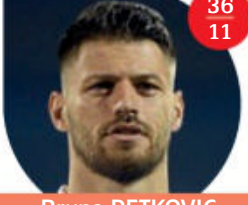
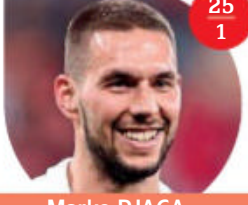
COACH

Zlatko DALIC
Age 57 (26.10.66)
Appointed October 2017

Thrust into the hot seat on the eve of Croatia's final qualifier for Russia 2018, Dalic has gone on to become the longest-serving and most successful coach in his country's history. A worthy successor to the late, great Miroslav Blazevic, Croatia's leader at France '98 and Dalic's advisor during his earlier career as a club coach. A good communicator with a sharp tactical mind and an uncanny knack of anticipating events before they happen, Dalic is loyal to his players but unafraid of eliminating anyone who disturbs team unity. His staff is populated with respected former players.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Ivica IVUSIC Pafos (Cyp) Age 29 (01.02.95) Back-up goalkeeper since 2021. Has left a solid impression on the national team but, as yet, hasn't threatened Livakovic's position. First choice for his club in Cyprus.	 Nediljko LABROVIC Rijeka Age 24 (10.10.99) Established as Rijeka's No.1 and looks destined to become Livakovic's long-term successor for Croatia. Some already regard him as superior but simply lacking experience.	 Dominik LIVAKOVIC Fenerbahce (Tur) Age 29 (09.01.95) Croatia's No.1. Secure and cold-blooded even in the toughest of situations. Excellent reflexes, good reactions to close-range shots and a penalty-saving specialist.	 Martin ERLIC Sassuolo (Ita) Age 26 (24.01.98) A reliable centre-back and an unused squad member in Qatar who caught the eye in the 2022-23 Nations League. Joined Parma at 16, now at home in Sassuolo.	 Josko GVARDIOL Manchester City (Eng) Age 22 (23.01.02) One of the team's most talented players, outstanding as a stopper or at left-back. The second-most expensive defender ever after joining City for €90m in 2023. Fast and aggressive.	 Josip JURANOVIC Union Berlin (Ger) Age 28 (16.08.95) First called up in 2017, it wasn't until nearly four years later that he won a firm place in the XI thanks to his Celtic form. Safe defensively with attacking threat. A standout star of Qatar 2022.
	 Marin PONGRACIC Lecce (Ita) Age 26 (11.09.97) Recalled in November, after nearly 18 months out of the squad, thanks to his good form in Serie A. German-born centre-back who started in Bayern Munich's academy.	 Borna SOSA Ajax (Ned) Age 26 (21.01.98) Likely to be named ahead of Borna Barisic as the squad's left-back, with Gvardiol able to cover if needed. Outstanding at Stuttgart, but yet to make his mark at Ajax.	 Josip STANISIC Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 24 (02.04.00) Started five qualifiers at right-back, but capable of playing anywhere across the backline. Born in Munich, he played for Germany U19s before switching to Croatia.	 Josip SUTALO Ajax (Ned) Age 24 (28.02.00) Warrior-like centre-back who took his chance after injuries to Domagoj Vida and Dejan Lovren. His stock has dropped a little as a result of Ajax's struggles, but Dalic still trusts him.	 Domagoj VIDA AEK Athens (Gre) Age 35 (29.04.89) Has enjoyed a rebirth since moving to Greece in 2022. A veteran of Russia 2018, he is now a back-up for Croatia. Courageous, excellent in duels and a good passer.	 Martin BATURINA Dinamo Zagreb Age 21 (16.02.03) Elegant attacking midfielder voted the Croatian league's Young Player of the Year in 2022-23. Low centre of gravity and a threat from free-kicks.
	 Marcelo BRODOVIC Al Nassr (KSA) Age 31 (16.11.92) An outstanding distribution machine, tireless runner and excellent shooter who combines well with Modric. Remains a key player despite move to Saudi Arabia.	 Luka IVANUSEC Feyenoord (Ned) Age 25 (26.11.98) Versatile attacking midfielder who has ably filled in for Perisic. Left out for Qatar 2022, but bounced back with some impressive performances for Dinamo Zagreb and Feyenoord.	 Mateo KOVACIC Manchester City (Eng) Age 30 (06.05.94) A composed midfielder and excellent passer, used by his club when more control is required. Injured for large chunks of qualifying, but deserves his place in the starting XI.	 Lovro MAJER Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 26 (17.01.98) Elegant and cultured midfielder seen as Modric's successor, although often starts on the right wing. Earned a €30m move to Wolfsburg last summer after shining at Rennes.	 Luka MODRIC Real Madrid (Spa) Age 38 (09.09.85) Croatia's greatest-ever player and all-time record appearance maker. Ballon d'Or winner in 2018. Directs play on the field with an undimmed desire to lead his country.	 Mario PASALIC Atalanta (Ita) Age 29 (09.02.95) Spent six years on Chelsea's books, without playing a game, and loaned out around Europe before finally settling in Italy. Played every qualifier, but mostly as a sub.
	 Luka SUCIC Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) Age 21 (08.09.02) Intelligent, technical midfielder who was born in Austria, but has played for Croatia from the U15s through to the seniors. An unused squad member at the 2022 World Cup.	 Nikola VLASIC Torino (Ita) Age 26 (04.10.97) Strong offensive midfielder with good ball control and a sense of where the goal is. Scored against Egypt in March – his first start in 18 months. Made three sub appearances in qualifying.	 Ante BUDIMIR Osasuna (Spa) Age 32 (22.07.91) Bosnian-born striker whose aerial ability is handy in both boxes. Shared No.9 duties with Petkovic, Kramaric, Petar Musa and the now-retired Marko Livaja in qualifying.	 Andrej KRAMARIC Hoffenheim (Ger) Age 32 (19.06.91) Opportunistic and versatile forward, one of the 2018 World Cup veterans and Croatia's top scorer in qualifying. Has his own fan club in the Czech village of Kramy.	 Marco PASALIC Rijeka Age 23 (14.09.00) German-born left-footed right-winger with a rocket shot, who is proving a hit for Rijeka after spells in Stuttgart and Dortmund's second teams. Made his Croatia debut in November.	 Ivan PERISIC Hajduk Split Age 35 (02.02.89) Croatia will be praying that their joint-second highest scorer of all time can recover his form and fitness in time. A direct, versatile and defensively responsible winger.
	 Bruno PETKOVIC Dinamo Zagreb Age 29 (16.09.94) Tall and strong forward with an excellent touch, great technique and the ability to deceive defenders in tight spaces. Vital for his club and pushing hard for the No.9 shirt.	 Marko PJACA Rijeka Age 29 (06.05.95) Very talented winger and a Russia 2018 squad member whose career has been blighted by injury. Joined Juventus in 2016, but after several loans is now in great form at Rijeka.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Ivo GRBIC (Sheffield United, Eng), Dominik KOTARSKI (PAOK, Gre)

DEFENDERS

Borna BARISIC (Rangers, Sco), Duje CALETA-CAR (Lyon, Fra), Jakov MEDIC (Ajax, Ned), Dario MELNJAK (Hajduk Split), Filip UREMOVIC (Hajduk Split)

MIDFIELDERS

Kristijan JAKIC (Augsburg, Ger), Nikola MORO (Bologna, Ita), Niko Kristian SIGUR (Hajduk Split)

FORWARDS

Dion Drena BELJO (Augsburg, Ger), Josip BREKALO (Hajduk Split), Matija FRIGAN (Westerlo, Bel), Franjo IVANOVIC (Rijeka), Marin LJUBICIC (LASK, Aut), Petar MUSA (FC Dallas, USA), Mislav ORSIC (Trabzonspor, Tur), Roko SIMIC (Red Bull Salzburg, Aut)



Under new management

The Czechs have made it to their eighth consecutive European Championship – but it wasn't pretty

Immediately after sealing qualification for Euro 2024 with a 3-0 win over ten-man Moldova in November, Jaroslav Silhavy announced that he was stepping down as head coach of the Czech Republic, citing the enormous pressure of the job.

It was an unusual move but not a complete shock. In October, a 3-0 loss in Albania and a laboured 1-0 home win over the Faroe Islands cast Silhavy's future into doubt. Ultimately the Czech FA opted to spare him, but shortened his contract – with an option to continue if the national team qualified for Euro 2024 – hardly a ringing endorsement. Alongside disappointing results, Silhavy's team selection was criticised as too conservative, and the mood within the squad seemed to have soured.

Last year, Silhavy had a mysterious falling-out with Antonin Barak, dropping the creative midfielder after the first two qualifiers in March and failing to select him again for the rest of qualifying. There was more unrest as the campaign reached its climax, with reports that three of Silhavy's regular starters – right-back Vladimir Coufal, forward Jan Kuchta and central defender Jakub Brabec – had been pictured in a nightclub just two days before the decisive final qualifier.

The trio were sent home by the Czech FA, who stated that the players

The man tasked with bringing the good times back is Ivan Hasek, a former captain of Czechoslovakia and, briefly, Czech Republic's interim head coach in 2009

had "fundamentally violated the internal rules of the national team", and qualification was sealed without them. But for Silhavy the incident was the final straw: "It hurt me badly, I admit it, but I've been mulling this decision for a while," he told journalists after announcing his resignation.

In fairness, bad luck also played a role in Silhavy's demise. Injuries deprived him of top striker Patrik Schick for the entire qualification campaign. Several key players have struggled with poor form, while others endured limited playing opportunities at their clubs – among them one-time first-choice keeper

New coach...
Ivan Hasek



Tomas Vaclik, now having to reset in the Spanish second-tier at Albacete.

The man tasked with bringing the good times back is Ivan Hasek, a former captain of Czechoslovakia and, briefly, Czech Republic's interim head coach in 2009. Most recently the manager of Lebanon after spells in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Hasek's record in the Middle East isn't particularly impressive, but he is a respected figure with a unique blend of experience. His top priority, he says, is playing entertaining football and, given the timeframe he has to work in and the chaotic circumstances of his appointment, it might be unrealistic to expect more.

Still, under Hasek the Czechs should be well organised and tough to beat.

While this isn't a generation of Czech footballers blessed with great individual talents, a crop of talented youngsters – among them Matej Jurasek and Pavel Sulc – could offer an element of surprise.

Sam Beckwith

IVAN HASEK



What are your memories of your first spell with the national team in 2009?

I came at the end of World Cup qualifying. We didn't manage to qualify, but I appreciate the fact that we didn't lose any of our five matches. There was a change of generations in the national team at that time and it wasn't an easy period. I am even more motivated now to get to the next World Cup.

Thereafter you spent about a decade managing in the Middle East. How do you reconnect to Czech football?

There was no problem. I stayed in touch the whole time that I was training abroad. At the same time, of course, I followed Czech football closely. Plus, I'm lucky with the people around me. In the national team, I am surrounded by young colleagues who have a lot of drive.

What has changed in Czech football since 2009 and since your spell with Sparta Prague in the late 1990s?

In the Czech Republic, we underestimate ourselves sometimes, but the Czech league is good and competitive. For example, three clubs made it to the knockout phase of the UEFA competitions this year. The football culture is also growing significantly. Just look



Silhavy's final game
...Czech players
celebrate during the
3-0 win over Moldova

at the attendance for the national team, Slavia, Sparta, Plzen and other clubs. I'm happy about this and I hope that such a shift will continue.

What is your philosophy as a coach?

I always want the players to follow the rules we agree on. On the field and in the locker room.

What would be a successful Euros?

Our first goal will be to qualify for the knockout stages. We want to win every game, but everyone knows that Portugal will be the favourites of the group, although we will want to surprise this opponent as well. So the games against Georgia and Turkey could be the key.

How important are Tomas Soucek and Patrik Schick to the team?

Both have proven this in the past. They are really important – on the field and also in the locker room. Their positions at West Ham and Leverkusen speak for themselves. They also dominated the last five editions of the Player of the Year in the Czech Republic.

You open against Portugal. That's as difficult as it gets...

Portugal are one of the Euro favourites. They have a great manager and players. But if we were afraid, we wouldn't even go to the championship. We're

going into this game with the intention of succeeding. We'll do everything we can.

Could your final group game against Turkey be the most decisive?

You can also look at it the other way around. If we succeed against Portugal, we'll be at an advantage before the games against Georgia and Turkey.

Key striker...Patrik Schick scored five goals at Euro 2020



Can Czech Republic repeat the performance of Euro 2020?

Why not? As I mentioned, our first goal is to advance. If we do that, we can move on.

Samindra Kunti



TACTICS

Into the unknown

The game against Portugal will be Ivan Hasek's first competitive match back in charge, which adds an element of guesswork to predicting his approach and starting XI.

Assistant coach Jaroslav Kostl has spoken of blending the playing style of Prague rivals Sparta and Slavia, playing out from the back through the keeper but also hitting opponents at set-pieces and with direct balls. With that in mind, Hasek favours players with speed and height.

Kostl also indicated that the Czechs will change formation depending on their opponents. The friendlies in March bore this out with a 4-2-3-1 used in Norway and a 3-4-3 deployed against Armenia. Other options include 5-4-1 and 5-3-2.

Midfielder Tomas Soucek will certainly start, as should striker Patrik Schick (if fit) and right-back Vladimir Coufal (if recalled). Schick's club team-mate Adam Hlozek would be the natural choice as second striker but lacks form. Pavel Sulc, Mojmir Chytil or Ondrej Lingr could deputise.

Ladislav Krejci would normally start in central defence or midfield, but hasn't been at his best this season, while Antonin Barak, now back in the fold under Hasek, offers creativity and options in midfield. Hasek is a big fan of Matej Jurasek, but the 20-year-old right-winger might be used in the role of impact sub.



Certain starter...
Tomas Soucek

Hoping for a recall
...Vladimir Coufal



SCHEDULE

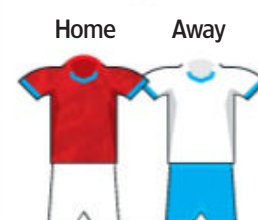
FRIENDLIES

Jun 7
v **Malta**
(n, Grodig)
Jun 10 v **North Macedonia**
(h, Hradec Kralove)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 18
v **Portugal**
(Leipzig)
Jun 22
v **Georgia**
(Hamburg)
Jun 26
v **Turkey**
(Hamburg)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM CZECH REPUBLIC



"I expect the national team to be more cohesive, disciplined and enjoyable under Ivan Hasek because of his personality. He can create a positive environment, with a healthier atmosphere, better mentality and greater confidence, communicating clearly with players and fans."

Tomas Radotinsky, TV commentator, O2 Sport



"The group-stage draw is definitely very acceptable for the Czech team. I expect Portugal to be too strong for anyone else in the group, but I think the expectation will be that we get at least a point against Turkey and win against Georgia, who came out of the play-offs."

Martin Vait, journalist, iSport.cz

COACH

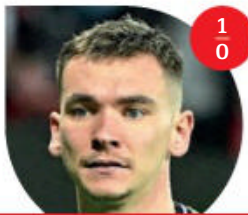
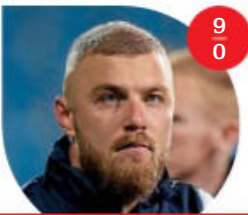
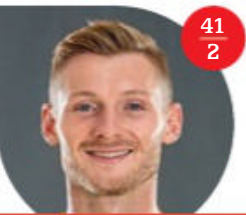
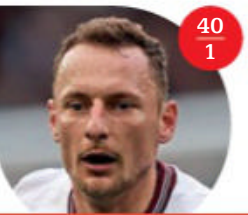
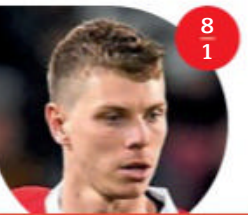
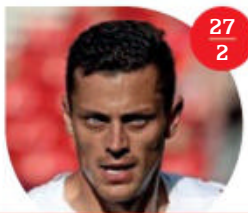
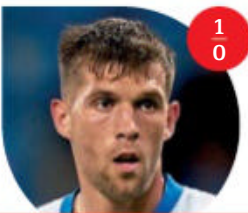
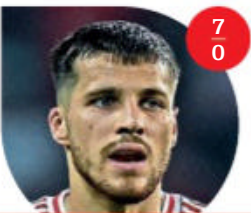
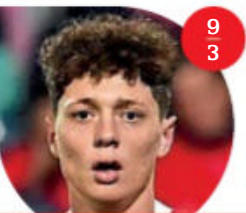
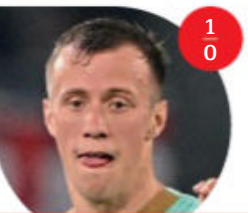
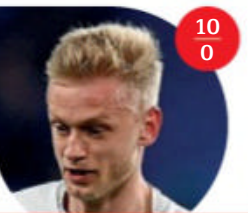
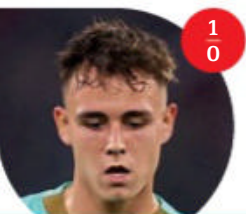
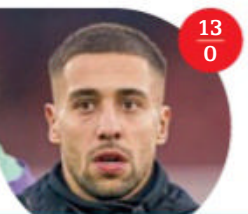
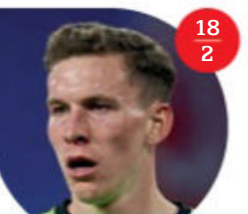
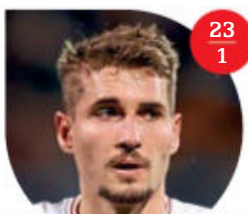
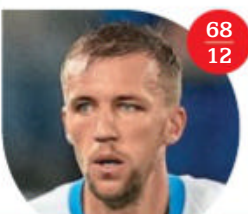
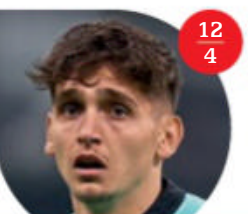
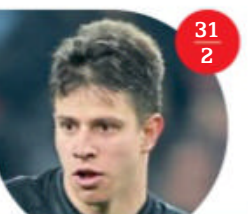
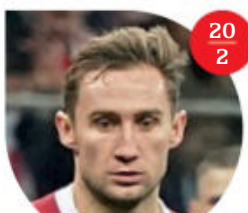
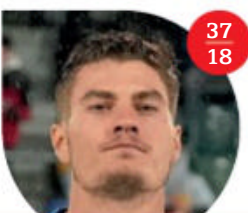


Ivan HASEK
Age 60 (06.09.63)
Appointed January 2024

Announcing Hasek's appointment as coach earlier this year, Czech FA boss Petr Fousek highlighted "human experience" alongside coaching abilities. That experience includes captaining Czechoslovakia at the 1990 World Cup and heading the FA himself – when he appointed himself as the national team's interim coach – plus coaching in eight different countries. A qualified lawyer, Hasek's greatest coaching achievements came at the turn of the century, leading Sparta Prague to two league titles and the Champions League last 16.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 1 0 Matej KOVAR Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 24 (17.05.00) Highly-rated youngster, formerly with Manchester United. Made his reputation on loan at Sparta Prague last term. Mainly used in cup competitions in Germany. Debuted in March.	 9 0 Jindrich STANEK Slavia Prague Age 28 (27.04.96) Likely first choice, if fit, who played the final two qualifiers after Jiri Pavlenka lost his place. Joined Slavia from rivals Viktoria Plzen in a big winter deal. Once on Everton's books.	 54 0 Tomas VACLIK Albacete (Spa) Age 35 (29.03.89) Experienced former first-choice keeper. Now playing regularly in the Spanish second tier following a disastrous spell with MLS side New England Revolution.	DEFENDERS	 41 2 Jakub BRABEC Aris (Gre) Age 31 (06.08.92) Experienced, elegant centre-back with a big personality. Prospering in Greece after leaving Plzen in 2021, although Martin Vitik may be preferred if Hasek opts against recalling him.	 40 1 Vladimir COUFAL West Ham United (Eng) Age 31 (22.08.92) Speedy, aggressive and determined right-back or wing-back who followed Tomas Soucek from Slavia Prague to East London in 2020. Expected to be recalled for the Euros.	 8 1 David DOUDERA Slavia Prague Age 26 (31.05.98) Very fast right-back or right-sided midfielder, once clocked running 22.3 mph in a Czech league game, who also played at left wing-back in qualifying. Vying with Adam Gabriel for a right-back berth.		
	 27 2 Tomas HOLES Slavia Prague Age 31 (31.03.93) Muscular centre-back who can also play as a defensive midfielder or at right-back. His goal and assist against the Netherlands took the Czechs through to the quarter-finals at Euro 2020.	 1 0 Robin HRANAC Viktoria Plzen Age 24 (29.01.00) Tough centre-back whose impressive recent performances for Plzen and the Czech U21 side have attracted Hasek's attention. Debuted in March against Armenia.	 7 0 David JURASEK Hoffenheim (Ger) Age 23 (07.08.00) Young left-back playing on loan in the German Bundesliga after failing to make an impression at Benfica. First choice in qualifying and should start ahead of Zeleny.		 9 3 Ladislav KREJCI Sparta Prague Age 25 (20.04.99) Upcoming central defender or midfielder, named Sparta captain at just 23. Not to be confused with the former Czech international winger of the same name who was last capped in 2019.	 1 0 Tomas VLCEK Slavia Prague Age 23 (28.02.01) Young, intelligent, unusually fast centre-back, flourishing at title-chasers Slavia after being on loan at Pardubice in 2022-23. One of a number of stars from last summer's U21 Euros.	 10 0 Jaroslav ZELENY Sparta Prague Age 31 (20.08.92) Elegant, unflappable and highly-versatile defender who mainly performs at left-back. Currently in the best form of a career entirely spent in the Czech league. Could start in a back four.		
	 20 1 David ZIMA Slavia Prague Age 23 (08.11.00) Centre-back. Strong in the air and a good reader of the game. Back at Slavia after a spell with Torino, with his €4m fee making him the Czech league's most expensive signing ever.	MIDFIELDERS	 39 9 Antonin BARAK Fiorentina (Ita) Age 29 (03.12.94) Talented left-footed central midfielder who celebrated his recall by Hasek in March with a stunning free-kick against Norway. Overcame a back defect and fatigue syndrome as a teenager.		 15 5 Vaclav CERNY Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 26 (17.10.97) Creative left-footed right-winger currently struggling for form, but outstanding last season for Twente. Before Wolfsburg spent his entire career in the Netherlands, graduating at Ajax.	 1 0 Matej JURASEK Slavia Prague Age 20 (30.08.03) Exciting but inexperienced winger, seen by Hasek as a potential game-changer from the bench. Another youngster who received his first cap in March. No relation to left-back David.	 13 0 Ondrej LINGR Feyenoord (Ned) Age 25 (07.10.98) Attacking midfielder who can also play as a forward. Limited playing time on loan at Feyenoord from Slavia Prague, but a handful of sub appearances in the Champions League.	 18 2 Lukas PROVOD Slavia Prague Age 27 (23.10.96) Tall left-sided midfielder who can also play more centrally. Missed Euro 2020 with a knee injury, instead earning an economics degree by studying while sidelined.	
	 23 1 Michal SADILEK Twente (Ned) Age 25 (31.05.99) Versatile defensive player, typically used in midfield but also very capable at left-back. His older brother, Lukas, is also a Czech international who featured in qualifying.		 68 12 Tomas SOUCEK West Ham United (Eng) Age 29 (27.02.95) Tall box-to-box midfielder who remains one of the key Czech players. Team captain and current Czech Footballer of the Year. Only player to play every minute in qualifying.		 1 0 Pavel SULC Viktoria Plzen Age 23 (29.12.00) Young, in-form attacking midfielder who can score and create goals. Currently among the Czech First League's top scorers. Hasek handed him his debut in March against Norway.	FORWARDS	 3 2 Tomas CHORY Viktoria Plzen Age 29 (26.01.95) Controversial but very effective 6ft 6in targetman, whose aggressive style often angers opponents. Scored against Moldova in November on his international debut.	 12 4 Mojmir CHYTIL Slavia Prague Age 25 (29.04.99) Strong, tall, hard-working centre-forward who is hard to dispossess. Scored a hat-trick on his debut against the Faroe Islands. Predominantly a substitute in qualifying.	 31 2 Adam HLOZEK Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 21 (25.07.02) Versatile young forward, still in contention for a place in Hasek's squad despite limited playing time for his club. Debuted as an 18-year-old in September 2020.
	 20 2 Jan KUCHTA Sparta Prague Age 27 (08.01.97) Wholehearted centre-forward who can play deeper or on the wing. Started more than any forward in qualifying and, like Brabec and Coufal, will be hoping for a recall. Keeps hens as a hobby.		 37 18 Patrik SCHICK Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 28 (24.01.96) Tall, powerful, yet elegant star striker. Missed all of qualifying with a lingering adductor injury, but will start if fit. Memorably scored from the halfway line v Scotland at Euro 2020.		ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Vaclav HLADKY (Ipswich Town, Eng), Vitezslav JAROS (Sturm Graz, Aut), Ales MANDOUS (Slavia Prague), Jiri PAVLENKA (Werder Bremen, Ger) DEFENDERS Adam GABRIEL (Midtjylland, Den), Filip PANAK (Sparta Prague), Patrizio STRONATI (Puskas Akademia, Hun), Martin VITIK (Sparta Prague) MIDFIELDERS Alex KRAL (Union Berlin, Ger), Lukas MASOPUST (Slavia Prague), Lukas SADILEK (Sparta Prague) FORWARDS Tomas CVANCARA (Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger), Vaclav JURECKA (Slavia Prague), Vasil KUSEJ (Mlada Boleslav), Jan MATOUSEK (Bohemians 1905)				



Blending generations

Denmark must work out how to combine their experienced veterans with emerging talents

You can never be quite sure with Denmark. They dazzle their way to the semi-finals in one tournament and then flop horribly at the next. Once upon a time at Euro '92 they were even fairy-tale winners. Write them off at your peril, but at the same time fear the worst.

There are reasons for optimism at this European Championship, not least the emergence of Rasmus Hojlund as an international class striker to give the Danes a cutting edge they have sorely lacked for many years. A strong team spirit fostered by head coach Kasper Hjulmand and a core of experienced players who understand the dynamics of tournament football are also positive factors.

Expectations among Danish fans, however, are not high. It's clear that the careers of several key stars like Christian Eriksen and Simon Kjaer are gently fading with age, that there is little strength in depth among the new generation, and that too many bright talents, like Jesper Lindstrom at Napoli, are not starting regularly for their clubs.

Above all, there is a sense that head coach Hjulmand faces key selection choices going into Euro 2024. He is confronted by the most difficult question for an international team

Kasper Hjulmand is confronted by the most difficult question: stay loyal to the players who have been the heart of his team, or decide if it's time for a changing of the guard?

boss: stay loyal to the players who have been the heart of his team, or decide if it's time for a changing of the guard?

The temptation, usually, is to keep faith and delay too long in making the switch from old to new. But this is not science, there is no certain right and wrong, and the timing of this dilemma just before a major tournament is hardly ideal. The dilemma is real enough, though.

Hjulmand has heard the myriad voices of pundits and former players saying that Eriksen shouldn't be in the starting line-up. He knows that keeper Frederik Ronnow's outstanding form

Fading star...will this be Christian Eriksen's final tournament?



for Union Berlin provides serious competition to 37-year-old Kasper Schmeichel in goal. He understands well enough that Simon Kjaer's pace in defence is diminished at the age of 35. The head coach will also wonder whether he can jettison players with more than 350 international caps between them.

Whichever way he jumps, Denmark should be good enough to progress from the group stage. England will obviously be difficult, but they were superior to Slovenia in the qualifiers and Serbia is another winnable game – particularly if Kasper Dolberg, impressing at Anderlecht this season, can forge an attacking partnership with Hojlund. Beyond that, anything is a bonus.

Jim Holden



KASPER HJULMAND



How do you reflect on qualifying?

We knew it would be difficult because it was ten matches where we had the ball a lot. It's difficult to break down these hard-working, organised teams. In Kazakhstan we had a big bump. We were leading 2-0 after 70 minutes. Everything seemed under control, done and dusted [Denmark went on to lose 3-2]. So that was a big blow. We won the group deservedly, but we have to improve.

Are the older players under pressure?

I'm not looking at age. I just look at how

good they are. Simon [Kjaer] has struggled with some injuries, but now he's playing. He played ten games before the March window from the start for Milan. He won eight and drew twice. Every time he plays they do well, so with Simon it's a matter of keeping him injury-free. Kasper [Schmeichel] is still up and going. Christian [Eriksen] is not playing too much with Manchester United and, of course, it's important for our players to play.

Rasmus Hojlund has a lot of promise...

He's a great striker, a great personality. If you think he's only power, running and energy, it's the wrong assumption. He's a good footballer. Rasmus has a lot of things that we like and is



New generation...
Rasmus Hojlund
is Denmark's
outstanding
young talent

willing to learn. He knows he's here to develop and, at the same time, he's eager to win and perform for the team. He's a team player and a good role model for the youth.

What are your thoughts on your group?

Tough. The first match is crucial. Slovenia have made massive progress in the last few years. They are a well-coached team with creative set-pieces. They have high quality in goal with Oblak, and with Sesko a top striker now and in the future. England have so much quality and so much talent. I said five years ago that if you look at the young players England are producing, they will win something in the next ten years. Then against Serbia it's very

equal. So a tough group, but we are positive. We have a lot of quality in our team and we have that togetherness. Hopefully, we'll have a fantastic summer. 50,000 Danes have already booked a ticket, so Germany will be red and white during the tournament.

Can any team outside of the favourites win Euro 2024?

It's getting more and more difficult. In football, you can be the better team and lose. You can also be the worst team and win. That's why football is so interesting because it's not rational all the time. When Denmark won in 1992, it was eight

teams, two groups and much shorter. The longer the tournaments are, the more likely the stronger teams will win.

Are you a fan of the 24-team format?

There are pros and cons. Half of Europe participates in the finals, but it's great to see a nation like Georgia being there for the first time. Last time it was Finland. It's great for football in those countries. I don't think the format where you can progress as third in the group is a great idea, but I understand why we do it.

Samindra Kunti

Fostering team spirit...Hjulmand





TACTICS

Horses for courses

Denmark have used six different formations in the past two years – that's if you study hard and happen to see essential differences, for example, between 3-4-1-2 and 3-4-2-1. What they possess for certain is huge flexibility on the part of coach Hjulmand and his players. The tactics for each match depend on the strength and nature of opponents, and also on the players available for the game.

Against weaker sides, the Danes tend to rely on a 4-3-3, although they have also played 4-2-3-1 with Rasmus Hojlund as a lone striker. When they face strong sides you are more likely to see three at the back, with adjustments ahead. The influential Joakim Maehle can feature as a wing-back in a 3-5-2 or 3-4-2-1, but as a full-back or wide midfielder in others – and is capable of playing on either flank.

If Christian Eriksen is fit enough, and if he is chosen, he may be handed a free role, possibly within a 3-4-1-2 formation. A great advantage for Denmark is that if a match is not going well, the coach can change tactics with confidence that the players will adapt. Barcelona's occasional use of Andreas Christensen in midfield gives Hjulmand another tactical option.



Free role...
Christian Eriksen

Influential...
Joakim Maehle



SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 5
v **Sweden**
(h, Copenhagen)
Jun 8
v **Norway**
(h, Brøndby)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 16
v **Slovenia**
(Stuttgart)
Jun 20
v **England**
(Frankfurt)
Jun 25
v **Serbia**
(Munich)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM DENMARK



"Denmark have a golden chance to make a flying start to the tournament. If they can beat Slovenia, the second match against England is something of a free hit. But if they don't beat Slovenia the pressure will be enormous on the Danish players against England."

Morten Bruun, TV analyst and ex-Denmark international



"I see the horror scenario from the Qatar World Cup happening again. There is absolutely nothing new in what Kasper Hjulmand is doing. This team is crumbling, and the Euros finals is no place for a farewell party for the same old faces."

Thomas Gravesen, ex-Denmark, Everton and Real Madrid midfielder



COACH

Kasper HJULMAND

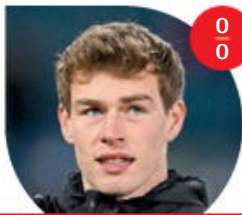
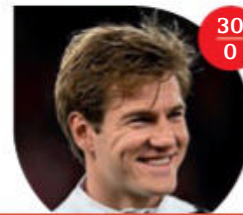
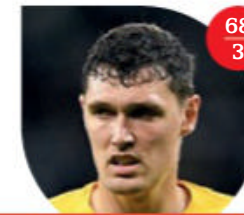
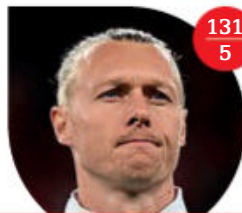
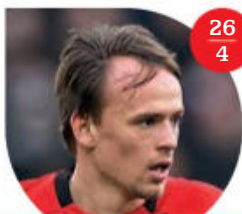
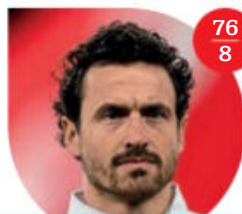
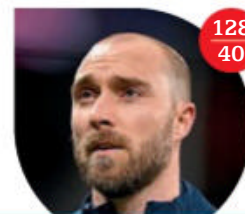
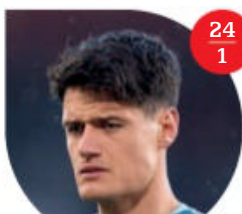
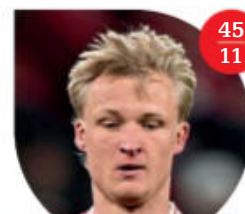
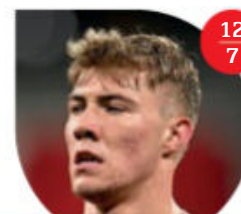
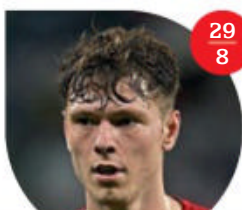
Age 52 (09.04.72)

Appointed August 2020

Hjulmand heads into his third major tournament with Denmark as one of the most respected coaches across Europe. A strong 63 per cent win rate with the Danes speaks for itself, and even more impressive was the emotional intelligence he showed in response to the Christian Eriksen trauma at Euro 2020. His standing in the game is also illustrated by constantly being linked to club jobs, including Ajax and teams in the Bundesliga. Hjulmand, though, has signed a contract until 2026 with Denmark. He first made his name by winning the Danish title with Nordsjælland.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Mads HERMANSEN Leicester City (Eng) Age 23 (11.07.00) Ball-playing goalkeeper in the modern idiom, who starred for Leicester in their Championship campaign, and likely to be Denmark's long-term man between the sticks.	 Frederik RONNOW Union Berlin (Ger) Age 31 (04.08.92) Pushing hard to become Denmark's No.1 thanks to a brilliant season with Union Berlin, where he has just signed a contract extension. Made his senior bow in 2016.	 Kasper SCHMEICHEL Anderlecht (Bel) Age 37 (05.11.86) Denmark's first-choice keeper for more than a decade, and still excelling with his latest club Anderlecht. Would love to emulate his father Peter's triumph in 1992.	DEFENDERS	 Joachim ANDERSEN Crystal Palace (Eng) Age 28 (31.05.96) An accomplished central defender, excellent on the ball and with a brilliant long-passing range. Likely starter on the right side of a back three.	 Alexander BAH Benfica (Por) Age 26 (09.12.97) Attack-minded right-back who can break with speed and is an accurate crosser. Featured early in qualifying but missed the tail-end with a foot injury. Spent two seasons in Portugal.	 Andreas CHRISTENSEN Barcelona (Spa) Age 28 (10.04.96) Elegant, cultured and experienced centre-back who won the Champions League with Chelsea. Comfortable on the ball, he is now showing he can also play in midfield at Barca.
	 Elias JELERT Copenhagen Age 20 (12.06.03) Promising right-back who was an integral part of Copenhagen's run in the Champions League this season. His versatility means he is also able to operate at left-back.	 Simon KJAER Milan (Ita) Age 35 (26.03.89) Captain of Denmark and their most-capped player, whose authority and leadership at the heart of the defence were crucial at Euro 2020. Not always a starter now for Milan.	 Victor KRISTIANSEN Bologna (Ita) Age 21 (16.12.02) The most expensive Danish Superliga player at £17m when joining Leicester, and now excelling on loan at Bologna. Most likely starter at left-back if Maehle is deployed on the right.		 Joakim MAEHLE Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 27 (20.05.97) The speedy wing-back can play on either flank, and has an impressive record of a goal every four games at international level. Especially dangerous on counter-attacks.	 Victor NELSSON Galatasaray (Tur) Age 25 (14.10.98) Strong central defender who won the Turkish league title in 2022-23 after two seasons at Copenhagen and three campaigns at Nordsjaelland. Played at the 2022 World Cup.	 Jannik VESTERGAARD Leicester City (Eng) Age 31 (03.08.92) The towering centre-back has been a rock in defence this season for Leicester, although a catalogue of yellow cards is cause for concern. First-choice reserve for the backline.
	 Mikkel DAMSGAARD Brentford (Eng) Age 23 (03.07.00) Struggling for minutes at Brentford, with his career stalling a little since his memorable free-kick goal v England at Euro 2020, but still has talent to burn.	 Thomas DELANEY Anderlecht (Bel) Age 32 (03.09.91) Classy veteran now part of the Danish brigade at Anderlecht after spells at Dortmund and Sevilla. One of the defensive options in midfield alongside Hjulmand and Norgaard.	 Christian ERIKSEN Manchester United (Eng) Age 32 (14.02.92) The greatest Dane of his generation, but suffering a period in the shadows at Old Trafford after a knee injury in November. Nonetheless, still integral to everything Denmark do.		 Morten HJULMAND Sporting (Por) Age 24 (25.06.99) Strong, intelligent defensive midfielder who has blossomed this season in Lisbon after previously starring for Lecce in Serie A. No relation to manager Kasper Hjulmand.	 Pierre-Emile HOJBJERG Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) Age 28 (05.08.95) Lively and experienced central midfielder who is a Denmark regular, and for the past four years a concrete presence at Spurs – albeit more as a substitute this campaign.	 Mathias JENSEN Brentford (Eng) Age 28 (01.01.96) Fine playmaker who has developed in five seasons at Brentford and the most likely successor to Eriksen in midfield. Could assume a central midfield berth in a more attack-minded XI.
MIDFIELDERS	 Christian NORGAARD Brentford (Eng) Age 30 (10.03.94) Wonderful passer, good in the air and a strong presence in midfield. A long part of Brentford's Danish revolution, but an intermittent choice for the national team.	FORWARDS	 Mohamed DARAMY Reims (Fra) Age 22 (07.01.02) Speedy forward who is razor sharp in one-to-one contests, but a little goal-shy. Currently playing for Reims after a spell at Ajax and coming through Copenhagen's academy.	 Kasper DOLBERG Anderlecht (Bel) Age 26 (06.10.97) A striker whose talent has taken time to mature, perhaps too long, but now in superb form and scoring goals with Anderlecht. Previously on the books of Ajax and Nice.	 Anders DREYER Anderlecht (Bel) Age 26 (02.05.98) The right-winger has been scoring for fun at Anderlecht this season, and has possibly overtaken the likes of Gustav Isaksen and Jesper Lindstrom for a squad place.	 Rasmus HOJLUND Manchester United (Eng) Age 21 (04.02.03) The great young hope of Danish football, full of power and pace. Found his top goalscoring form after a slow start at Old Trafford. Hit a hat-trick on his first international start.	 Yussuf POULSEN RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 29 (15.06.94) The eternal unsung striker who keeps proving critics wrong and keeps getting picked. Has spent 11 years at RB Leipzig, scoring close to 100 goals. Often used as a sub by Hjulmand.
	 Andreas SKOV OLSEN Club Brugge (Bel) Age 24 (29.12.99) Strong and dependable right-winger with an eye for goal who has been a regular pick in recent times. Joint-top scorer in Denmark's 2022-23 Nations League campaign.		 Jonas WIND Wolfsburg (Ger) Age 25 (07.02.99) Tall striker who is maintaining his career strike-rate of a goal every three games for both Wolfsburg and Denmark. The most-used striker in Euro qualifying.				
ALSO IN CONTENTION							
GOALKEEPERS							
Oliver CHRISTENSEN (Fiorentina, Ita), Andreas HANSEN (Nordsjaelland), Filip JORGENSEN (Villarreal, Spa)							
DEFENDERS							
Martin JORGENSEN (Brentford, Eng), Rasmus KRISTENSEN (Roma, Ita), Jacob RASMUSSEN (Brondby), Mads ROERSLAV (Brentford, Eng), Jens STRYGER LARSEN (Malmo, Swe)							
MIDFIELDERS							
Philip BILLING (Bournemouth, Eng), Morten FRENDRUP (Genoa, Ita), Jesper LINDSTROM (Napoli, Ita), Matt O'RILEY (Celtic, Sco), Nicolai VALLYS (Brondby)							
FORWARDS							
Martin BRAITHWAITE (Espanyol, Spa), Jacob BRUUN LARSEN (Burnley, Eng), Marcus INGVAERTSEN (Nordsjaelland), Gustav ISAKSEN (Lazio, Ita), Robert SKOV (Hoffenheim, Ger)							



Now or never

Gareth Southgate's legacy as England manager will be determined in Germany

Ahead of Gareth Southgate's fourth and possibly final tournament as England manager, it is remarkable just how little the discourse around him has changed in the past six years.

Ever since the dust settled on an unlikely fourth-place finish at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, the 53-year-old has been maligned as overly cautious in his tactics and selection, excessively loyal to underperforming players, and incapable of the kind of in-game tactical tweaks that is needed at the business end of tournaments. In short, Southgate's critics say that he is holding back the most talented generation that the country has ever produced, and nothing short of bringing the trophy home will convince them that he is the right man for the job. No excuses, no ifs or buts, and no more years of hurt.

It is fortunate for England, then, that one of Southgate's biggest strengths is his ability to cocoon his players from that level of scrutiny and create an environment that they can thrive in. It is no coincidence that Southgate's teams have consistently performed at major tournaments, seemingly unburdened by the outside pressures that damaged so many talented English squads of the past.

Still, for all the progress, the wait

Nothing short of bringing the trophy home will convince the critics that Southgate is the right man for the job. No excuses, no ifs or buts, and no more years of hurt

for that elusive trophy goes on.

Euro 2020, played almost entirely on home soil, felt like the Three Lions' best possible chance of silverware, with a penalty-shootout defeat to Italy in the final ultimately costing them. Qatar 2022 was the FA's long-term target for ending the drought, only for the team to be eliminated by eventual finalists France in a quarter-final of incredibly fine margins.

Yet where those two squads had potential, this one has pedigree. Declan Rice and Bukayo Saka are now the driving forces of an exceptional Arsenal side; Kyle Walker, John Stones and Phil

Now or never...
Gareth Southgate



Foden were integral members of Manchester City's treble-winning team, with the latter enjoying his best-ever season in 2023-24; and Harry Kane and Jude Bellingham are the leading scorers and talismans at European heavyweights Bayern Munich and Real Madrid after huge summer moves. It is a mouth-watering line-up, arguably the envy of any country in Europe.

And yet after three near misses, Southgate's England are in danger of becoming just another example of international chokers, a few carats short of a genuine golden generation. The time to correct the record is this

summer, and if Southgate cannot silence his doubters then the sense of wasted potential will linger over his entire tenure.

Jamie Evans



GARETH SOUTHGATE



What did you get out of the March friendlies against Brazil and Belgium?

We gained valuable information about so many players. I was pleased with the Brazil performance, bar the transitions and the final-third play. But against Belgium, the final-third play was very good – it was just the finishing that wasn't always there. In both games the transitions were a bit of a problem, and defensively we weren't as solid as we would have liked. But we have been brave with our press – at times you reap the rewards for that, at other times you live on the edge with it.

Did Jude Bellingham emerge as England's go-to man in Harry Kane's absence?

Jude was obviously the headline against Belgium. His competitive spirit and desire not to lose – and to win – was decisive and gave him a late goal. But I thought the whole team showed that and recovered from setbacks.

Have you now settled on your formation?

Clearly, our preference now is to go with a back four because we have these attacking players. We can play with a No.10 or two No.8s, and that opens itself up to different players. If we are playing with a No.10, both Jude and James Maddison might be key to unlocking a different type of opponent.



High expectations
...England's class of
2024 has huge talent

Is it possible we will see Bellingham playing deeper to get other players in?

As new players emerge, you are looking at the best way of getting a Bellingham or a Kane into the team, and what the balance of the team is behind that, because you can't just have seven or eight attackers.

How strong is the current pool of attacking talent at England's disposal?

There were lots of good creative performances in our recent games. I wanted to see Anthony Gordon again – I thought he had an excellent impact in the first game [against Brazil]. Jarrod Bowen had an excellent game against Belgium, Ivan Toney was very, very good. I thought we

managed to get Phil Foden into the game well the longer it went on, and Maddison had a good impact as well. These guys are playing well, they're scoring regularly, they perform well, defend well, work hard, they compete and we've got really good options in that area of the pitch. I've always been able to see the quality that Cole [Palmer] has as well. He's shown some great composure in real pressure moments for his club and he's adaptable – he can play in two or three different positions, maybe more. He's had an outstanding season. You understand I can't guarantee anybody a place.

**Go-to man...
Southgate with
Jude Bellingham**



And what about Kobbie Mainoo's emergence in the midfield?

From a creative aspect, Kobbie gives us something different. His attributes are there for everybody to see, his ability to receive under pressure and ride challenges, to manipulate the ball in tight areas. He gives us a different profile of midfield player to anything else we've got. He has adapted and adjusted brilliantly. You can't believe his age really as he has taken it all in his stride.

Matt Read



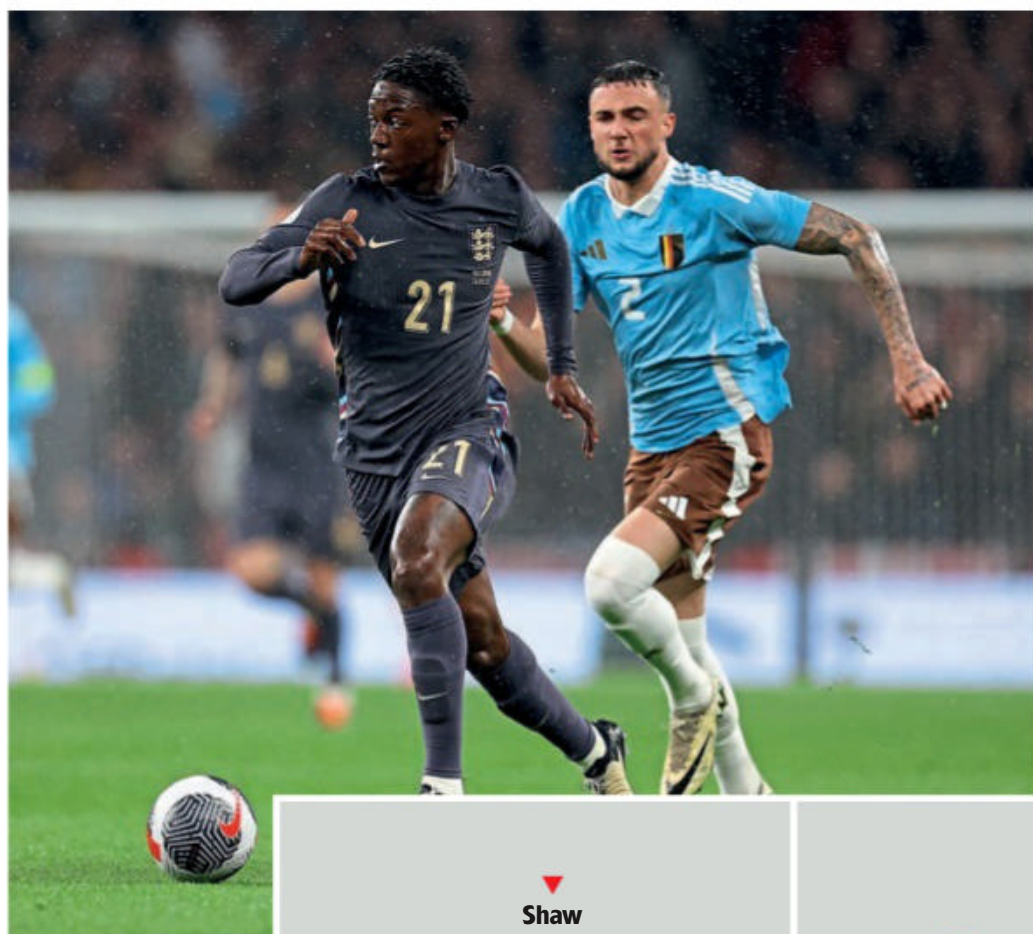
TACTICS

Solving the midfield riddle

Before March's friendlies with Brazil and Belgium, Southgate's biggest question was who should join Jude Bellingham and Declan Rice in midfield. That question now seems to have been answered by Manchester United starlet Kobbie Mainoo, who looked instantly at home on his England debut, adding bite and balance alongside his more experienced team-mates. Other players – particularly Trent Alexander-Arnold – may yet come into the equation but Mainoo, for now, is in the box-seat.

Many have called for Bellingham to drop deep to allow Phil Foden to play as the No.10, but the likelihood is that Bellingham will continue in the position where he has shone so brightly for Real Madrid, with the Manchester City man given license to roam from the left.

That ploy will be particularly effective if England can keep their left-backs fit. Ideally, Luke Shaw – one of the standout performers at Euro 2020 – will provide the attacking width on that side, but the Manchester United man is a doubt for the finals after suffering a muscle injury in February. Ben Chilwell offers similar qualities, but his fitness and form have also been questioned. Using a right-footer like Kieran Trippier or Joe Gomez would not be disastrous, but will hinder England's fluidity in building attacks.



Midfield maestro
...Kobbie Mainoo
impressed on his first
start for England

Fitness doubt
...Luke Shaw



SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 3 v
Bosnia-Herzegovina
(H, Newcastle)
Jun 7
v **Iceland**
(H, Wembley)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 16
v **Serbia**
(Gelsenkirchen)
Jun 20
v **Denmark**
(Frankfurt)
Jun 25
v **Slovenia**
(Cologne)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM ENGLAND



"I think England will fall just short. I don't think they have the world-class goalkeeper or enough defenders to get over the line. I think Gareth has done a very good job and I wouldn't have any complaints if he continued, but I think the country would want change if we don't win it, or at least get to the final."

Jamie Carragher, ex-England defender



"I feel genuine optimism about England's chances. They have the world-class ability of Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane, as well as strength elsewhere. Reservations? In central defence and at left-back if Luke Shaw is not fit. And any injury to Kane could end their hopes."

Phil McNulty, BBC Sport chief football writer



COACH

Gareth SOUTHGATE

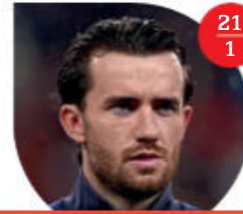
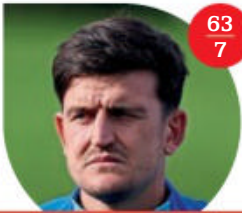
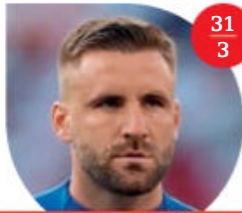
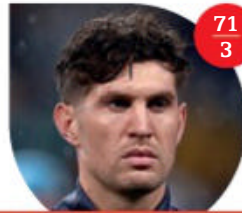
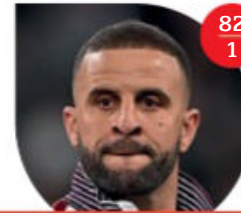
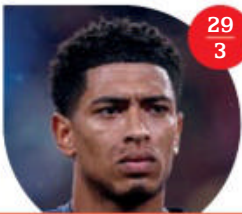
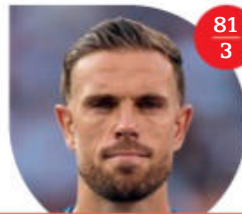
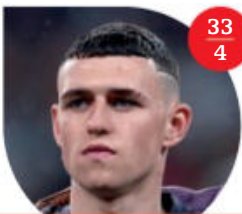
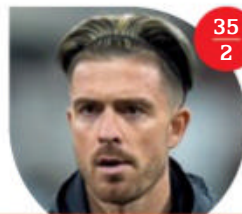
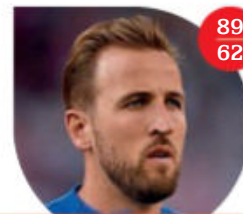
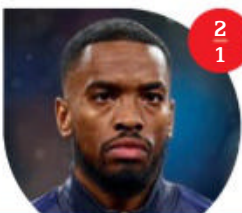
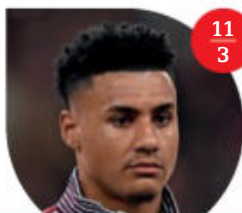
Age 53 (03.09.70)

Appointed September 2016

This June will mark 28 years since Southgate's missed penalty in the semi-final of Euro '96 ended England's hopes of winning the trophy, and he remains as determined as ever to make up for it. *Dear England*, a play about his journey as England boss, came to the end of its West End run in January, and Euro 2024 could be his curtain call too, with talks over extending his deal – which expires this year – on hold until after the finals. "I have no idea where we'll be in the middle of July," he told *The Athletic* in March. "I hope it's Trafalgar Square."

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.2024)

GOALKEEPERS	 Jack BUTLAND Rangers (Sco) Age 31 (10.03.93) Injuries to Nick Pope and Sam Johnstone have opened the door for Butland, whose last cap was in 2018. Impressed against Celtic in front of Southgate in April.	 Jordan PICKFORD Everton Age 30 (07.03.94) England's No.1 since the 2018 World Cup. His left-footed distribution gives him the edge over his rivals and, although he has the occasional error in him, he has never let England down.	 Aaron RAMSDALE Arsenal Age 26 (14.05.98) A lack of minutes at Arsenal shouldn't cost the former Sheffield United and Bournemouth keeper his place in the squad, though he remains Pickford's understudy.	 Ben CHILWELL Chelsea Age 27 (21.12.96) Energetic left-back who could force his way into the XI if Luke Shaw's fitness remains an issue. One of three unused outfielders in the Euro 2020 squad.	 Joe GOMEZ Liverpool Age 27 (23.05.97) Injury cost him his spot at the 2018 World Cup, and it has taken him a while to re-emerge on the England scene. Highly versatile, he has excelled playing everywhere across Liverpool's back four.	 Marc GUEHI Crystal Palace Age 23 (13.07.00) The young centre-back's reputation was enhanced by missing out on March's friendlies, when Lewis Dunk's errors looked to have ruled the Brighton man out of contention.
	 Harry MAGUIRE Manchester United Age 31 (05.03.93) If Maguire's doubters haven't yet given up on trying to force him out of the team, they should; only Harry Kane has been picked more by Southgate. Aerially dominant centre-back.	 Luke SHAW Manchester United Age 28 (12.07.95) A muscle injury makes him a doubt for the finals but, when fit, England's first-choice left-back. Scored the opening goal at Wembley in the Euro 2020 final against Italy.	 John STONES Manchester City Age 30 (28.05.94) The only outfield player to have started every tournament game under Southgate. Imperious centre-back with outstanding distribution skills, who fluidly steps into the midfield.	 Kieran TRIPPIER Newcastle United Age 33 (19.09.90) Versatile full-back and set-piece specialist who delivers in key moments, such as assisting in the Euro 2020 final and scoring in the 2018 World Cup semi-final.	 Kyle WALKER Manchester City Age 34 (28.05.90) Set to overtake Kenny Sansom and Gary Neville to become England's second-most capped full-back behind Ashley Cole. Fifth tournament in a row for England's rapid right-back.	 Trent ALEXANDER-ARNOLD Liverpool Age 25 (07.10.98) Offers creativity, dead-ball excellence and emergency right-back cover, but still yet to establish himself in the England team. World-class passer.
	 Jude BELLINGHAM Real Madrid (Spa) Age 20 (29.06.03) A <i>Galactico</i> in every sense of the word, Bellingham will go to Germany with the sole intention of dragging England to the trophy. Ludicrously talented.	 Conor GALLAGHER Chelsea Age 24 (06.02.00) Energetic pressing midfielder from Chelsea's academy who, like Phil Foden and Marc Guehi, helped England win the U17 World Cup in 2017. One of the bright lights from his club's erratic season.	 Jordan HENDERSON Ajax (Ned) Age 33 (17.06.90) Last summer's move to Saudi Arabia still rankles with fans, and he's not the player he was in the past, but the experienced vice-captain remains a key voice in the squad.	 James MADDISON Tottenham Hotspur Age 27 (23.11.96) His cameo off the bench v Belgium, with Bellingham dropping deeper, offers a clue as to how England might chase games when trailing. Creative, technical playmaker with a good long-range shot.	 Kobbie MAINOO Manchester United Age 19 (19.04.05) A man-of-the-match performance against Belgium in March thrust the teenager from squad outsider to potential starter. Huge talent with bundles of natural ability.	 Declan RICE Arsenal Age 25 (14.01.99) One of only four players to have started in every game at both of England's last two tournaments. Has more than justified his £105m price tag at Arsenal. The complete midfielder.
	 Phil FODEN Manchester City Age 24 (28.05.00) Expectations will be sky-high after his best-ever individual season. Has outrageous technique, a wonderful left foot and dovetails excellently with Bellingham.	 Anthony GORDON Newcastle United Age 23 (24.02.01) Has enjoyed a stunning club season off the back of winning Player of the Tournament at last summer's U21 Euros. An electric dribbler who impressed against Brazil.	 Jack GREALISH Manchester City Age 28 (10.09.95) Remains vulnerable after missing a lot of action this term, but is still a go-to man for Pep Guardiola in the big club games. A popular squad member with a style that suits international football.	 Harry KANE Bayern Munich (Ger) Age 30 (28.07.93) Three goals at Euro 2024 will make Kane England's joint-top scorer at European Championships – one of the few goal records he doesn't already possess. Undroppable captain.	 Cole PALMER Chelsea Age 22 (06.05.02) Proved his doubters wrong by excelling at Chelsea after leaving Manchester City last summer. A huge talent, with a languid style and cultured left foot, who can play in various attacking roles.	 Bukayo SAKA Arsenal Age 22 (05.09.01) England's joint-top scorer in Qatar with three goals and, like Foden, heading to Germany off the back of his best-ever scoring season. A humble right-winger who just keeps getting better.
	 Ivan TONEY Brentford Age 28 (16.03.96) His ability to hold up the ball and link up play makes him Kane's ideal deputy. Would be Brentford's first English representative at a major tournament. Penalty specialist.	 Ollie WATKINS Aston Villa Age 28 (30.12.95) The sheer weight of goals and assists in a massively impressive season for Villa could see Watkins selected over the misfiring Marcus Rashford. Playing with supreme confidence.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Dean HENDERSON (Crystal Palace), Sam JOHNSTONE (Crystal Palace) – <i>injured</i>, Nick POPE (Newcastle United), James TRAFFORD (Burnley) DEFENDERS Jarrad BRANTHWAITE (Everton), Levi COLWILL (Chelsea), Eric DIER (Bayern Munich, Ger), Lewis DUNK (Brighton & Hove Albion), Reece JAMES (Chelsea), Ezri KONSA (Aston Villa), Rico LEWIS (Manchester City), Fikayo TOMORI (Milan, Ita), Ben WHITE (Arsenal) MIDFIELDERS Ross BARKLEY (Luton Town), Harvey ELLIOTT (Liverpool), Eberechi EZE (Crystal Palace), Morgan GIBBS-WHITE (Nottingham Forest, Eng), Curtis JONES (Liverpool), Ruben LOFTUS-CHEEK (Milan, Ita), Mason MOUNT (Manchester United), Calvin PHILLIPS (West Ham United), James WARD-PROWSE (West Ham United) FORWARDS Jarrod BOWEN (West Ham United), Marcus RASHFORD (Manchester United), Dominic SOLANKE (Bournemouth)			

Misunderstood masterpiece

Not always easy on the eye, but France's squad depth and tournament knowhow make them a major force

In the late 1800s, French impressionist Claude Monet was at the peak of his output but far from lauded as he is today. His paintings were deemed ugly and unrefined; only decades later were they acclaimed as masterpieces. Over a century on, haughty critics scoff at another subtly artful Frenchman. Despite unprecedented success, Didier Deschamps will also only be truly appreciated when he's gone.

When Deschamps was appointed as head coach, *Les Bleus* were only ever between crises. The calamitous 2010 World Cup under eccentric manager Raymond Domenech preceded Laurent Blanc's bumpy two-year spell. However, since a narrow 2014 World Cup quarter-final defeat to eventual champions Germany, Deschamps' France have made three of four major finals.

Although blessed with talent, French success is down to Deschamps' astute navigation of the tactical and political landscape. Although regularly bemoaned at home, France's functional style has become a blueprint for success abroad. Gareth Southgate cites *Les Bleus* as an influence; his England team may well emerge as France's leading rivals this summer.

Euro 2024 could see Didier Deschamps complete a seminal body of work

Injuries and suspensions haven't helped and Deschamps in particular has deftly handled the ongoing Paul Pogba saga well. A four-year ban for an alleged doping offence – which the Juventus midfielder has said he will appeal – for one of the squad's emotional leaders could have been destabilising ahead of a major tournament, but *Les Bleus* remain peaceable and on track.

Despite much success, Deschamps perhaps deserved more. A workmanlike and Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina capitalised on illness-induced sluggishness to win the 2022

International master...Didier Deschamps guided France to 2018 World Cup glory



World Cup final, while Portugal's smash-and-grab Euro 2016 triumph remains painful. Euro 2024, however, could see Deschamps complete a seminal body of work.

Only two of the 14 players used in the victorious 2018 World Cup final are sure to be first choice in Germany. Deschamps' faith in and development of youth, another underappreciated triumph, has produced what could become the second great team of his tenure – a rare feat for an international coach.

Ominously for the rest, French uncertainty remains minimal. Despite elder absentees, Deschamps' team should appear largely unchanged from 2022,

especially in midfield and attack where the final starters could all stay the same. Defensively, Mike Maignan is an upgrade in goal while Raphael Varane will be ably replaced by Arsenal centre-back William Saliba. Jules Kounde is favourite to keep the troublesome right-back spot and the Hernandez brothers will again compete on the left. Although less experienced, it's an improving picture.

Deschamps' France may lack the beauty of Monet's Water Lilies but their success at Euro 2024 could yet be regarded as part of a masterpiece.

Adam White

DIDIER DESCHAMPS



Kylian Mbappe could play less at club level due to PSG coach Luis Enrique's selection decisions. Does this worry you?

No, so much the better. An element of freshness in a major competition can be essential and playing three matches in a week inevitably causes fatigue. But there's no rhythm problem for Kylian. Luis Enrique said he would not interfere in my affairs and I'm not going to stick my nose into his.

Given his playing time for PSG, can Randal Kolo Muani still be a starter for France?



Star man...
Kylian Mbappe

This has happened before – Olivier Giroud's playing time with Chelsea was complicated, for example. Players have easier and harder periods but, obviously, to have confidence, you need playing time. Because of his past, because of his potential, Kolo Muani deserves his place in the group.

And the goalkeeping pecking order?
It's an evolving process. For now, Mike Maignan is number one, Brice Samba is number two and Alphonse Areola is number three. The order must be clear and this is defined before each meet-up. There was a March hierarchy, there was a November hierarchy and there will be a June hierarchy.

Could you include an uncapped player?
I'm not going to make any radical decisions – I've never done so. But if I think it's positive for the squad, why not?

Is William Saliba having difficulty replicating his club form for France?
He's having a good season but I see him alternating between what I like and that which I like a little less. With France he has had less playing time. The current hierarchy isn't always favourable for him but he is in contention...Dayot Upamecano has had the chance to make a difference, which William has not had yet.

Point to prove...
William Saliba



At right-back, are you deciding between Jules Kounde and Jonathan Clauss?
They are both in contention. Jules had a complicated period at Barcelona, he alternated a lot with a centre-back role, but he has been very good on the right recently. Jonathan also had a difficult period but he has a different skillset with superior offensive qualities, sometimes to the detriment of his defensive work. It's good to have two different profiles in a tournament, and even in a match.

Adam White



TACTICS

Proven pragmatic formula

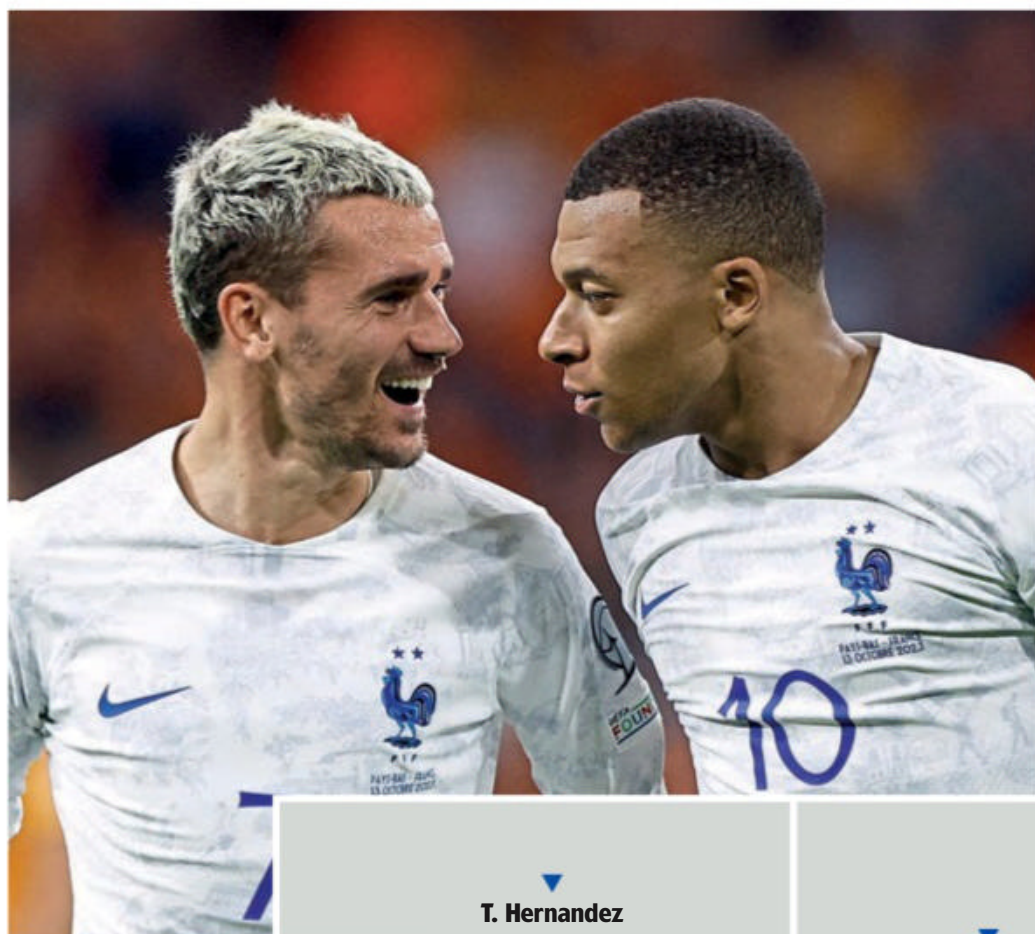
Expertly built and well-oiled but overtly functional, international football's leading outfit for nearly a decade has rarely resembled the club game's more flamboyant pioneers.

Deschamps understands the relatively glacial undulations of the national game more keenly than most. Lacking the time to instill detailed tactical processes, the World Cup-winning captain and coach has molded a pragmatic approach that maximises France's unmatched depth.

Key lieutenants Hugo Lloris and Raphael Varane have moved on since Qatar, but France's rearguard remains steadfast, while Kylian Mbappe leads a group of elite forwards relied upon to produce match-winning moments.

Preferring players suited to specific roles who won't disrupt group togetherness over picking the best stars available – a lesson from previous disasters – Deschamps' team resembles his own playing style: unspectacular, but efficient and ruthless. Its effectiveness hinges on the form of Mbappe, midfield link-man Antoine Griezmann and an often goal-shy pivot forward – probably Olivier Giroud – another historical trend.

Decoding the machine isn't tough, but thanks to its elite quality, proven reliability and astute management, stopping it is.



Proven force...
Antoine Griezmann
and Kylian Mbappe



Pivot forward...
Olivier Giroud

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 5
v Luxembourg
(h, Metz)
Jun 9
v Canada
(h, Bordeaux)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 17
v Austria
(Dusseldorf)
Jun 21
v Netherlands
(Leipzig)
Jun 25
v Poland
(Dortmund)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM FRANCE



"Les Bleus' unmatched depth is expected to see them compete in what would logically be a transition tournament following several retirements. The limp defeat to Germany in March, however, somewhat dampened the optimism. A favourable group draw, though, should help them click into familiar, clinical tournament mode."

Raphael Jacobin, *The Guardian*



"Against the backdrop of Les Bleus' recent successes, Euro 2020 is an outlier, marked by the failed experiment to reintegrate Karim Benzema. Fitness permitting, Olivier Giroud will lead the line this time around. Bar the right-back position, France head into Euro 2024 with selection certainties."

Luke Entwistle, *Get French Football News*

COACH



Didier DESCHAMPS

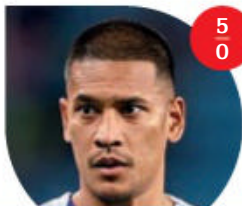
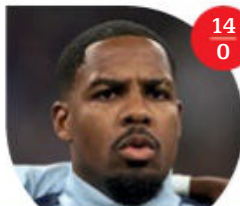
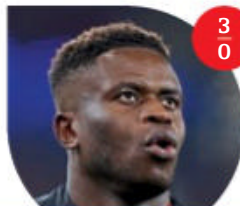
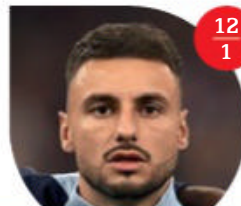
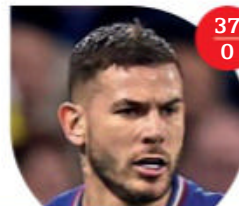
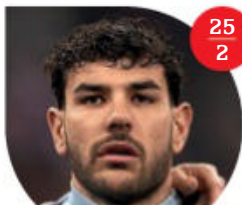
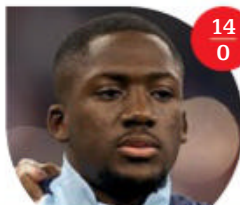
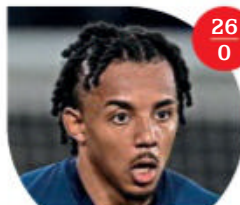
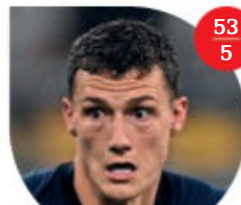
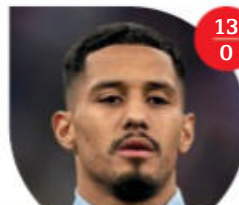
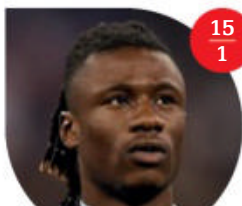
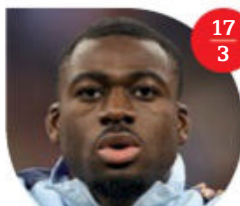
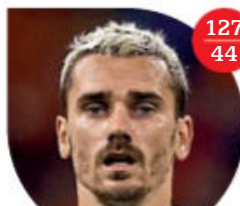
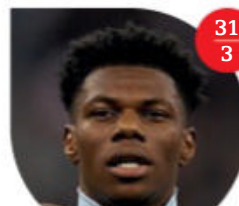
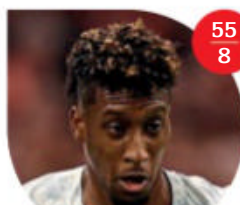
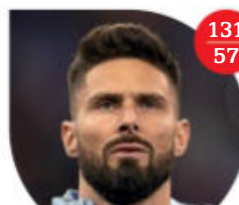
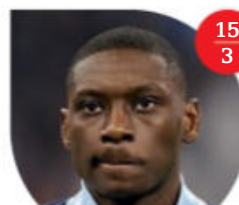
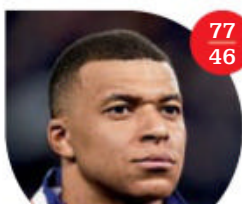
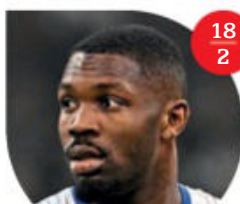
Age 55 (15.10.68)

Appointed July 2012

Deschamps approached Qatar 2022 in an uncertain position thanks to an expiring deal and Real Madrid's Champions League mastermind Zinedine Zidane reportedly coveting his job. In 2024, however, he is more secure than ever after the World Cup final run and a contract extension to 2026. He has established France as international football's standard bearers, but his wider CV is still underappreciated – it includes a 2009-10 Ligue 1 title and Coupe de la Ligue hat-trick at Marseille, and taking unfancied Monaco to the 2004 Champions League final.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 50 Alphonse AREOLA West Ham United (Eng) Age 31 (27.02.93) Long-term squad member and will remain third choice despite improving domestic options. Has seven clubs and six loan spells on his CV, but seems to have found a home in East London.	 140 Mike MAIGNAN Milan (Ita) Age 28 (03.07.95) Usually commanding and consistent with world-class potential, Maignan's club form has plateaued of late. Competently filled the void left by long-term custodian Hugo Lloris.	 30 Brice SAMBA Lens Age 30 (25.04.94) Underrated when helping Nottingham Forest win promotion to the Premier League, the Congo-born goalkeeper has become a key part of Lens' return to leading Ligue 1 club status.	 121 Jonathan CLAUSS Marseille Age 31 (25.09.92) Despite a fairy-tale rise, he has failed to take advantage of the right-back issues. Persistent Kounde doubts could give him a chance, barring a late push from Chelsea's Malo Gusto.	 50 Axel DISASI Chelsea (Eng) Age 26 (11.03.98) Made his France debut at the last World Cup and has proven a solid part of an erratic Chelsea side. Can fill the problematic right-back slot but nominally a strapping central defender.	 370 Lucas HERNANDEZ Paris Saint-Germain Age 28 (14.02.96) Left-back for PSG but regularly centre-back for France, where he played three times in qualifying. The older Hernandez brother missed most of Qatar 2022 after an early knee injury.
	 252 Theo HERNANDEZ Milan (Ita) Age 26 (06.10.97) A marauding left-back who is yet to truly translate what can be devastating club performances to international level. Played every minute in qualifying and looks a likely starter.	 140 Ibrahima KONATE Liverpool (Eng) Age 25 (25.05.99) Started three games at the 2022 World Cup, including the semi-final, and is best placed to capitalise on any uncertainty at centre-back. Strong and quick, but can be inconsistent.	 260 Jules KOUNDE Barcelona (Spa) Age 25 (12.11.98) Traditionally a centre-back, he looked a little awkward at right-back during Euro qualifying and at Qatar 2022, but a lack of options will likely see him continue there.	 535 Benjamin PAVARD Internazionale (Ita) Age 28 (28.03.96) Right-back or centre-back who has often performed when needed, but his France career remains patchy. Could be under pressure despite a positive start in Italy following seven seasons in Germany.	 130 William SALIBA Arsenal (Eng) Age 23 (24.03.01) After three loans, Saliba has blossomed at Arsenal and is now one of the elite centre-backs in England. Has been introduced slowly by Deschamps, but this could be his tournament.	 182 Dayot UPAMECANO Bayern Munich (Ger) Age 25 (27.10.98) Inconsistent yet talented, Deschamps' faith could be wavering but, like many others, his better form is often saved for <i>Les Bleus</i>. Predominantly partnered Konate in qualifying.
	 151 Eduardo CAMAVINGA Real Madrid (Spa) Age 21 (10.11.02) A former prodigy at Rennes who continues to develop in Madrid. Can be used at left-back, as has been the case for his club, but his dynamism is best utilised in midfield.	 173 Youssef FOFANA Monaco Age 25 (10.01.99) Ever popular with his team-mates, Fofana's rise has been accelerated by injuries and suspensions, but performances don't always match his ability. Originally broke through at Strasbourg.	 12744 Antoine GRIEZMANN Atletico Madrid (Spa) Age 33 (21.03.91) Flopping at Barcelona damaged appreciation of his abilities, but as a midfielder he remains France's crucial linchpin. Vice-captain and Euro 2016 Golden Boot winner.	 81 Matteo GUENDOUZI Lazio (Ita) Age 25 (14.04.99) Always gives everything for France, adding a rare belligerence that makes him a tough opponent. Blossomed at Marseille, and also has Premier League and Bundesliga experience.	 434 Adrien RABIOT Juventus (Ita) Age 29 (03.04.95) Often embattled at PSG, the versatile midfielder has finally settled in Italy, becoming a trusted and versatile Deschamps stalwart. Started six of the eight qualifiers.	 313 Aurelien TCHOUMENI Real Madrid (Spa) Age 24 (27.01.00) His Madrid displays – where he has often filled in at centre-back – have been solid rather than spectacular, but he has become a reliable Deschamps favourite. Memorably scored against England in Qatar.
	 10 Khephren THURAM Nice Age 23 (26.03.01) An energetic midfielder often linked with a big move, but a plateau in form mirrored by his club means his squad place may rely on injuries. Younger brother of striker Marcus.	 21 Warren ZAIRE-EMERY Paris Saint-Germain Age 18 (08.03.06) France's third-youngest player ever, scoring on his debut in November aged 17. Arsene Wenger told <i>Le Parisien</i> that he is a blend of Paul Pogba, N'Golo Kante and Patrick Vieira. High praise indeed.	 558 Kingsley COMAN Bayern Munich (Ger) Age 27 (13.06.96) Serial trophy winner who has battled injuries. A dependable, quality option for France, and ahead of the likes of Diaby and the injury-stricken Nkunku.	 435 Ousmane DEMBELE Paris Saint-Germain Age 27 (15.05.97) Unpredictable winger now part of a growing PSG contingent who will form the basis of Deschamps' attack. Failed to deliver on his potential at Dortmund and Barcelona, but an undoubted match-winner.	 13157 Olivier GIROUD Milan (Ita) Age 37 (30.09.86) Despite his age, the ex-Arsenal and Chelsea striker's presence remains necessary due to a lack of a consistent or, as yet, truly proven successor. France's all-time record scorer.	 153 Randal KOLO MUANI Paris Saint-Germain Age 25 (05.12.98) Having broken through at Qatar 2022, a move to PSG is yet to fully coalesce but he leads a youthful group of newly-trusted squad options. Can lead the line or play out wide.
	 7746 Kylian MBAPPE Paris Saint-Germain Age 25 (20.12.98) Can make France seem unstoppable, but they'd be eminently beatable without him. National team captain and exhilarating forward seen by many as the world's best player.	 182 Marcus THURAM Internazionale (Ita) Age 26 (06.08.97) A versatile facilitator striker, Thuram's strong first season with Inter suggests that Giroud's long-term successor may finally have arrived. Son of 1998 World Cup winner Lilian.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS
Lucas CHEVALIER (Lille), Alban LAFONT (Nantes)

DEFENDERS
Wesley FOFANA (Chelsea, Eng), Malo GUSTO (Chelsea, Eng), Castello LUKEBA (RB Leipzig, Ger), Ferland MENDY (Real Madrid, Spa), Jean-Clair TODIBO (Nice)

MIDFIELDERS
Boubacar KAMARA (Aston Villa, Eng) – *injured*, Jordan VERETOUT (Marseille)

FORWARDS
Bradley BARCOLA (Paris Saint-Germain), Moussa DIABY (Aston Villa, Eng), Christopher NKUNKU (Chelsea, Eng)



History-makers

Georgia will finally go to their first-ever major international tournament after so narrowly missing out on Euro 2020

For Georgia, victory over Greece in the Euro 2024 play-off final had been almost four years in the making. Back in November 2020, the country was just one game away from qualifying for Euro 2020 – all they had to do was beat North Macedonia in the play-offs on home soil in Tbilisi. On that occasion, however, it was their opponents who made history, with North Macedonia captain Goran Pandev striking a famous winner to break Georgian hearts.

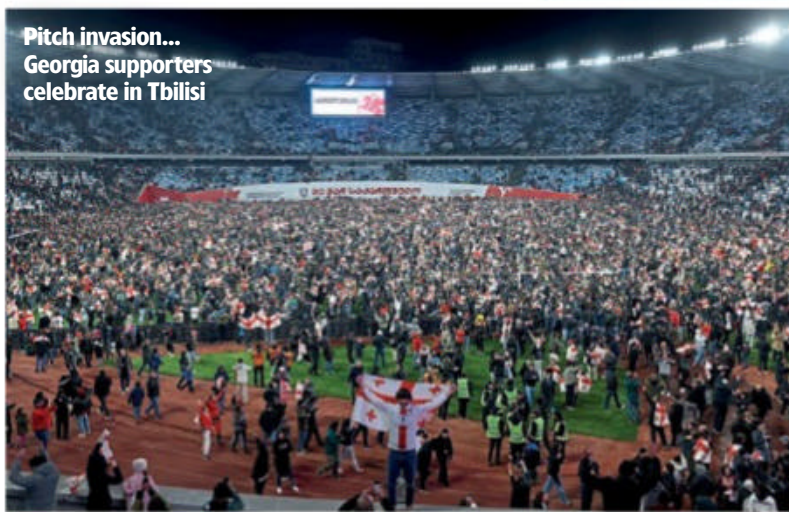
But rather than sulking in defeat, that setback only spurred Georgia to become stronger. During the 2022-23 Nations League campaign they earned promotion to League B for the first time, beating their old foes North Macedonia home and away, including 2-0 back in Tbilisi, to finish nine points above them in the group. This secured Georgia a second consecutive play-off spot – which proved particularly valuable after they finished fourth in their Euro qualifying group behind Spain, Scotland and Norway – and they were never going to let another opportunity to qualify for their first-ever major tournament since becoming an independent nation go to waste.

The play-off draw was kind to Georgia. They were already assured of playing the semi-final at home based on their Nations League ranking, but they were also drawn to host the final in Tbilisi.

They were never going to let another opportunity to qualify for their first-ever major tournament since becoming an independent nation go to waste

To get there, they had to overcome a stubborn Luxembourg, a task rendered tougher by the absence of the brilliant Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, suspended for accumulating too many yellow cards. A brace from Karlsruhe forward Budu Zivzivadze gave Georgia a 2-0 victory in a game not without its controversy. With the match on a knife-edge at 1-0, Luxembourg thought they had equalised through Gerson Rodrigues, only for VAR to intervene. Not only was the goal chalked off, Rodrigues' team-mate Maxime Chanot was sent off for the foul and, shortly afterwards, Zivzivadze made it two.

Pitch invasion...
Georgia supporters
celebrate in Tbilisi



The play-off final pitted Georgia against former European champions Greece, who had been looking to qualify for a first major tournament since the 2014 World Cup. But they will have to wait a bit longer. Georgia fought resolutely up until the final whistle and, in a nail-biting penalty shootout, Nika Kvekveskiri delivered a winning penalty that will be remembered in Georgia for eternity. The subsequent scenes saw Georgian fans storm the pitch, and celebrations lasted long into the early hours all across the country.

There are high hopes in Georgia for a successful Euro 2024. The country has an exciting group of players, many of whom caused major upsets at the Under-21 European Championship last summer finishing top of a group that included

the Netherlands, Portugal and Belgium. Now, a year later, they will be looking to cause an upset at Euro 2024 as well.

Bence Bocsak



WILLY SAGNOL



How does it feel to achieve an historical qualification for Euro 2024 with Georgia?

In football, you can't change everything in one month, two months or six months. It takes time, always. But to stay in Georgia, I would pay to feel what I feel today. So, I'm happy and I never thought about going, even if you had asked me before the game [against Greece]. I'm surrounded by amazing people and I think that's the most important thing.

What were your emotions during the play-off victory against Greece?

When you're a coach you make decisions and you hope it's going to be positive, but sometimes it's also a bit of luck. As a player, you feel happy when you win something because you are an actor of the game, making a good pass, scoring a goal, making a good tackle. When you're a coach, it's different. When you're a player you take everything, you take emotions, you take the applause of the people, but when you're a coach you have to give. Give, and give and give. And then one day you hope maybe even once you get something back, and [after beating Greece] all our efforts, all our hard work we put in over the last three years, we got it back and that's an amazing feeling.



History...Georgia players wheel off in celebration after sealing their place in Germany

How did you feel when Nika Kvekveskiri scored the winning penalty against Greece?

I want to have a special word about Nika because three and a half years ago he was one of the players who cried the most against North Macedonia. Today, his position did change a bit in the team. He's not always starting the match. But he came on during extra-time and he took the last penalty and he scored. He is a good example of whatever your situation, whatever the past, players show how much they love their country.

The journey Georgia have been on over the past few years has been remarkable...
If we want to be honest with each other,

we have to look at it on a large spectrum. I wasn't there, but in September 2018, for example, Georgia were in League D of the Nations League and now Georgia are in League B. On the same level as England. I'm not saying we are as good as England. We are even one level above Sweden, for example. I'm not saying we are better than Sweden. But I can just see the evolution. I say thank you to Vladimir Weiss, [he] also made a lot of good things here. And the staff, the federation, the players, I think things have been done quite well. The evolution is very positive. It's football, everything can happen.

Talisman...Sagnol talks with star man Khvicha Kvaratskhelia



How do you approach games as coach?

Dreaming about winning doesn't help anybody. If you do everything everyday to win then you have more chance than dreaming. Because anybody can dream. The winning mentality is waking up every morning and doing everything in order to win. We just work on what we think is best for the team. After that there are some opponents, and sometimes they are better, but you have to accept it. That's the way it is, it's football. There is no perfect recipe, but I can tell you there is hard work behind it.

Bence Bocsak



TACTICS

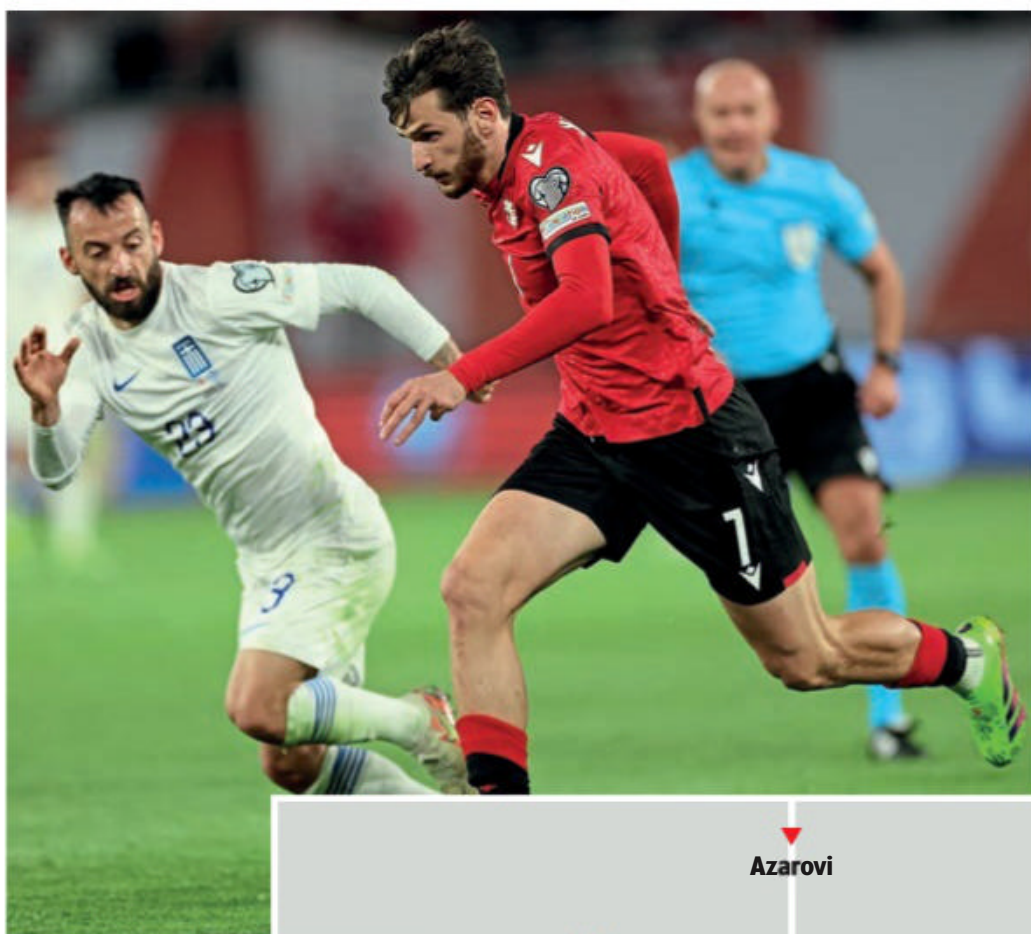
Counter-attacking football

Georgia averaged the lowest possession percentage during Euro 2024 qualification of all the teams that made it to the tournament, so it is perhaps not surprising that Willy Sagnol's side likes to sit deep.

The team has a strong defensive structure and they are difficult to break down, which means they will be tough to beat. They only lost three games by two goals or more in a very difficult qualifying group containing Spain, Scotland and Norway, and two of those were against the group winners Spain.

In attack, they will look to counter their opponents in quick, offensive transitions. Utilising the explosiveness of the likes of Khvicha Kvaratskhelia, Georges Mikautadze and Giorgi Chakvetadze, Georgia can hurt any opponent when going forward. Only Belgium completed more successful dribbles during the Euro qualifying campaign, so they will look to use their flair to their advantage.

It helps that they've got a young team full of zeal. Of the qualifiers for the finals, only Ukraine, Turkey and Romania fielded a younger average starting XI in qualifying. That youthful exuberance will spur Georgia on at the tournament. One thing is for certain, they will not be a dull watch.



Explosive dribbler... wing king Khvicha Kvaratskhelia



Goal threat... Budu Zivzivadze celebrates scoring v Luxembourg

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 9
v **Montenegro**
(a, Podgorica)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 18
v **Turkey**
(Dortmund)
Jun 22
v **Czech Republic**
(Hamburg)
Jun 26
v **Portugal**
(Gelsenkirchen)

KITS

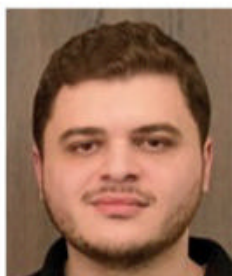


THE VIEW FROM GEORGIA



"We are still trying to digest what happened. But, of course, it will be tough – we have very strong opponents in our group. Georgia have some excellent players and there are also others not so well known, but they will have the opportunity to show their capabilities. In football, everything is possible."

Kakha Dgebuadze, ImediNews



"It is quite a strong group, but we can go to the next stage. Georgia have quite strong players. The fans are counting on them. However, no matter how they compete in this tournament, people will still be happy because this team has written history."

*Lasha Kokiashvili,
La Gazzetta dello Sport Georgia*

COACH



Willy SAGNOL (Fra)

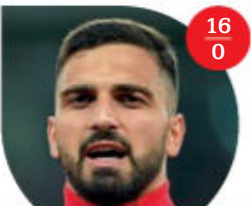
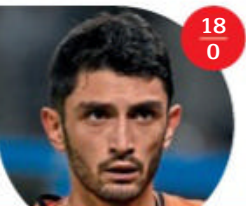
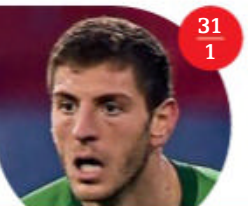
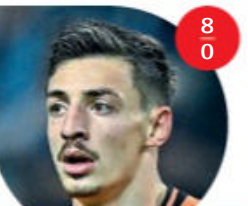
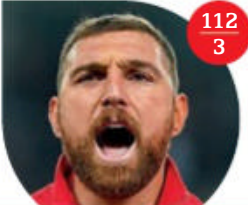
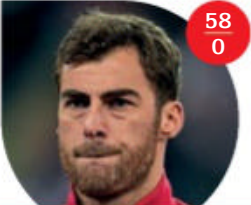
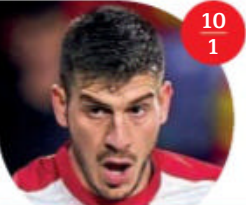
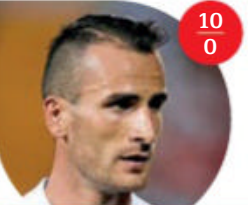
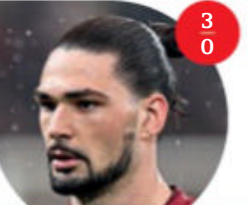
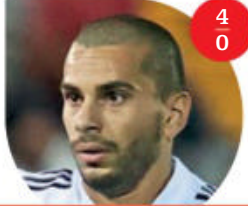
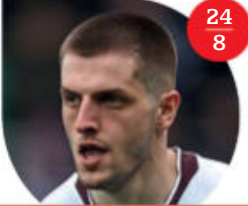
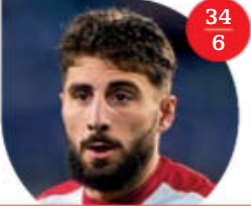
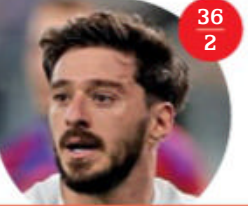
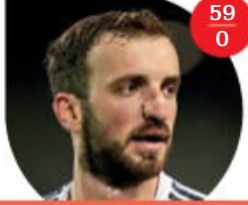
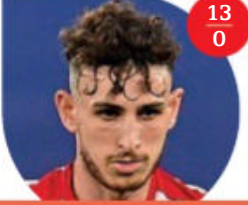
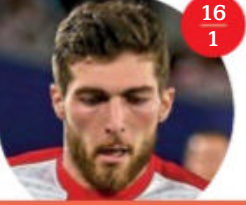
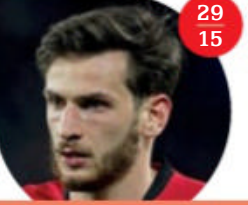
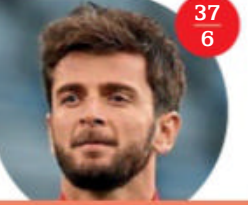
Age 47 (18.03.77)

Appointed February 2021

Sagnol enjoyed a distinguished playing career, playing in the 2006 World Cup final and winning two Confederations Cups for France and claiming numerous club honours, including the Champions League, with Bayern Munich. His coaching career began with France's U20 and U21 teams, before he was appointed at Bordeaux in 2014. He left in 2016 to join Bayern as Carlo Ancelotti's assistant in 2017, but was only at the Allianz Arena for a few months before Ancelotti was sacked. He then spent a few years away from management before returning to take charge of Georgia in 2021.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 10 Luka GUGESHASHVILI Qarabag (Aze) Age 25 (29.04.99) Towering figure who is the second-choice goalkeeper for his club in Azerbaijan. Expected to be Georgia's third-choice goalkeeper this summer.	 780 Giorgi LORIA Dinamo Tbilisi Age 38 (27.01.86) The most-capped goalkeeper in the country's history and was first choice for many years. These days he spends more time on the bench as back-up.	 160 Giorgi MAMARDASHVILI Valencia (Spa) Age 23 (29.09.00) One of the most exciting young keepers in Europe right now. He is a regular for Valencia and will be Georgia's No.1 this summer having played every minute in qualifying.	DEFENDERS	 180 Irakli AZAROV Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) Age 22 (21.02.02) Young left-back who made his senior debut as a 19-year-old in 2021 and was also part of last summer's U21 Euros side. A regular in qualifying, but missed the play-offs.	 311 Lasha DVALI APOEL (Cyp) Age 29 (14.05.95) Experienced centre-back, who can fill in at left-back, once on the books of Reading. Played against Barcelona and Juventus in the Champions League for former club Ferencvaros.	 80 Giorgi GOCHOLEISHVILI Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) Age 23 (14.02.01) Provided the assist in Shakhtar's shock 1-0 win over Barcelona in the Champions League this season. A talented young right-back, but not first choice for Georgia just yet.
	 600 Otar KAKABADZE Cracovia (Pol) Age 28 (27.06.95) A Dinamo Tbilisi product who has played in Spain, Switzerland and Denmark. Currently plies his trade in Poland. Crucial to Georgia's current system as the right wing-back.	 1123 Guram KASHIA Slovan Bratislava (Svk) Age 36 (04.07.87) Georgia skipper and the most-capped player in the country's history. Spent eight seasons at Vitesse in the Eredivisie before a couple of years in MLS at San Jose Earthquakes.	 580 Solomon KVIRKVELIA Al Okhdood (KSA) Age 32 (06.02.92) Two-time Georgian Footballer of the Year, "Saba" has played most of his career in Russia before moving to Saudi Arabia in 2023. Captain Kashia's main centre-back partner.		 101 Luka LOCHOSHVILI Cremonese (Ita) Age 26 (29.05.98) Centre-back currently playing in Serie B. Awarded the FIFA Fair Play award in 2022 for clearing the airwaves of an opponent who'd fallen unconscious and swallowed his tongue.	 100 Vladimer MAMUCHASHVILI Dinamo Batumi Age 26 (28.08.97) One of the few squad members who currently plays his club football in Georgia, representing 2023 league champions Dinamo Batumi. Provides right wing-back cover.	 30 Saba SAZONOV Torino (Ita) Age 22 (01.02.02) Centre-back who moved to Torino last summer from Zenit after catching the eye at the U21 Euros. He's yet to break into the Serie A side's starting XI, but very highly rated. One to watch.
	 40 Sandro ALTUNASHVILI Wolfsberger (Aut) Age 27 (19.05.97) Twice voted the Erovnuli Liga Midfielder of the Year, he's caught the eye playing for Wolfsberger in the Austrian Bundesliga this season. A useful midfield reserve.	 248 Giorgi CHAKVETADZE Watford (Eng) Age 24 (29.08.99) Once dubbed the next big thing and linked with Barcelona, Chakvetadze has resurrected his career recently at Watford. Another Dinamo Tbilisi alumnus. Got three assists in qualifying.	 346 Zuriko DAVITASHVILI Bordeaux (Fra) Age 23 (15.02.01) Dinamo Tbilisi graduate who now plays in France. Right-winger who can make a great impact off the bench – as he did when scoring a memorable late winner in qualifying against Cyprus.		MIDFIELDERS	 10110 Jaba KANKAVA Slovan Bratislava (Svk) Age 38 (18.03.86) The most experienced player in the squad having made his debut in 2004. Enjoyed his best years in France at Reims. Came out of international retirement for the Euro play-offs.	 362 Otar KITEISHVILI Sturm Graz (Aut) Age 28 (26.03.96) A creative goalscoring midfielder who has enjoyed a great career in Austria after coming through the ranks at Dinamo Tbilisi. The most-used midfielder in qualifying.
 590 Nika KVEKVESKIRI Lech Poznan (Pol) Age 32 (29.05.92) Vice-captain and defensive midfielder who scored the famous winning penalty against Greece to secure Euro 2024 qualification. The most-capped player for Georgia's Under-21s.	 130 Anzor MEKVABISHVILI Universitatea Craiova (Rou) Age 22 (05.06.01) Defensive midfielder and former captain of Georgia's Under-21 team. He was also the vice-captain of Dinamo Tbilisi before moving to Romania earlier this year.	 161 Levan SHENGELIA Panetolikos (Gre) Age 28 (27.10.95) Has played club football in Belgium, South Korea and Turkey. A valuable squad member and could rival Azarovi for the left wing-back spot having started there in the play-offs.	 161 Giorgi TSITAISHVILI Dinamo Batumi Age 23 (18.11.00) Left-winger tipped for bigger things when he won the Under-20 World Cup with Ukraine in 2019. Since elected to represent Georgia. His speed can hurt any opponent.	FORWARDS		 2915 Khvicha KVARATSKHELIA Napoli (Ita) Age 23 (12.02.01) Electric winger and star man. Helped Napoli win the Italian title for the first time in 33 years in 2022-23, earning the nickname "Kvaradona" after the late Diego Maradona.	 376 Giorgi KVILITAIA APOEL (Cyp) Age 30 (01.10.93) Experienced forward who has played in Hungary, Austria, Belgium and Cyprus. A back-up for Georgia, with his only appearances in qualifying coming as a sub in the play-offs.
 249 Georges MIKAUTADZE Metz (Fra) Age 23 (31.10.00) His move to Ajax hasn't quite worked out, but has since returned to Metz on loan and is back doing what he does best. Kvaratskhelia's main partner in qualifying and tipped for a bright future.	 257 Budu ZIVIVADZE Karlsruher (Ger) Age 30 (10.03.94) A tall, powerful forward who had been haunting defences in Hungary's top flight before his move to the 2. Bundesliga. Offers a strong physical presence up front.						

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS
Lazare KUPATADZE (Iberia 1999)

DEFENDERS
Iva GELASHVILI (Spezia, Ita), Giorgi GVELESIANI (Persepolis, Irn), Aleksandre KALANDADZE (Dinamo Tbilisi), Saba KHVADAGIANI (Maccabi Netanya, Isr), Jemal TABIDZE (Panetolikos, Gre)

MIDFIELDERS
Giorgi ABURJANIA (Hatayspor, Tur), Luka GAGNIDZE (Dynamo Moscow, Rus), Saba LOBZHANIDZE (Atlanta United, USA), Gabriel SIGUA (Basel, Sui)

FORWARDS
Giorgi ARABIDZE (Torpedo Kutaisi), Giorgi BERIDZE (Kocaelispor, Tur), Giorgi KVERNADZE (Frosinone, Ita), Davit VOLKOVI (Sabah, Aze)

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Lazare KUPATADZE (Iberia 1999)

DEFENDERS

Iva GELASHVILI (Spezia, Ita), Giorgi GVELESIANI (Persepolis, Irn), Aleksandre KALANDADZE (Dinamo Tbilisi), Saba KHVADAGIANI (Maccabi Netanya, Isr), Jemal TABIDZE (Panetolikos, Gre)

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Summer fairy tale 2.0?

The tournament hosts are hoping to recreate the good vibes of the 2006 World Cup

Julian Nagelsmann is about to join a select band of *Bundestrainers*: those who have taken charge of the Germany national team in a major finals on home soil. To date, only three other managers – Helmut Schon, Franz Beckenbauer and Jurgen Klinsmann – have had that honour and all either grasped glory or came very close to it, with Schon's West Germany winning the 1974 World Cup, Beckenbauer's side falling at the semi-final hurdle of Euro 1988 and Klinsmann masterminding a bronze medal at the 2006 World Cup.

It is an exceedingly high bar for Nagelsmann and company to aim for and the fans are wary of overdosing on optimism, their hopes ground down by the team's poor performances in each of the last three major international tournaments. For a football nation of Germany's stature, the spiral of underachievement has gone on for far too long.

Nagelsmann, who only took over from the sacked Hansi Flick last autumn, has precious little time to turn this super-tanker around and certainly would not have been reassured as his team played with a hari-kari indifference in friendly losses against Turkey and Austria in November.

While the Germans are by no

While the Germans are by no means short of individual class – especially in the attacking third – they have not been functioning as a team in recent years

means short of individual class – especially in the attacking third – they have not been functioning as a team in recent years. Nagelsmann is primarily known as a tactical guru, for the finesse with which he moves the Xs and the Os. Blood, sweat and tears is not his thing and the *Nationalmannschaft's* number one area of concern is their lack of traditional German virtues: grit, physicality and defensive rigour. That they conceded 22 goals in 11 fixtures last year speaks for itself.

Stability of personnel is another problem. In 2023, no fewer than 40 players were used, including 11 debutants.

Comeback kid
...Toni Kroos announced his return to international football in February



Still, hopes weren't particularly high ahead of the 2006 World Cup either, until an exciting new generation of players produced a performance that became known as the "*Sommermarchen*", or "Summer fairy tale", and this current team has promise also.

They will be guided by the returning Toni Kroos, back in the Germany fold after announcing his international retirement three years ago, and the midfield general should help steady the ship. With a reasonably favourable first-round draw alongside Scotland, Hungary and Switzerland, there is every

chance of a good start for Nagelsmann and his crew, which should see the nation swing solidly behind them and help create another memorable summer story.

Nick Bidwell

JULIAN NAGELSMANN



What are your objectives going into the European Championship this summer?

Generally, when one takes part in a tournament, whether it involves kids or at professional level, the aim is to win it. The goal is to perform very well as hosts in our European Championship. We don't merely want to inspire the people in Germany with the right results. We hope to thrill with good attacking football.

Do you envisage a remake of the "*Sommermarchen*", when the

German public went football crazy in the 2006 World Cup on home soil?

A "*Sommermarchen*" 2.0 would be the ideal scenario. I'll do everything I can to make it happen again. Holding a European Championship in Germany doesn't occur often. Along the way, we hope to enthuse the country, build the anticipation and showcase an outstanding land and its outstanding people.

How did you respond to your sacking as Bayern Munich coach last year?

I went on holiday and spent time with my family, just to do things I don't normally have time for. For the first few weeks it



Exciting talent...Kai Havertz and Florian Wirtz celebrate during March's win in France

was strange. I love to be active, to be at work. I used the time to reflect on my spell at Bayern. I'm pleased I now have the chance to make good on the mistakes I made at Bayern, to do a better job.

What sort of playing style can we expect from your Germany side at the Euros this summer?

We want to attack, to aggressively get forward and put the opposition under pressure. The aim is to generate stress for the other side. It must be difficult to play against us. This, I think, will spark the sort of positive emotions we need. The ideas we utilise will

not be as complex as in club football. Simplicity is a good keyword.

Will Ilkay Gundogan retain the captaincy when Manuel Neuer returns to the fold?

Ilkay is our skipper and will remain so. I have total faith in Ilkay Gundogan as a player and a person. He is very proud to wear the armband. Everyone on the field should have a bit of the captain in them. Manuel Neuer's word will continue to carry a lot of

Key man... Nagelsmann and his captain, Ilkay Gundogan



weight. There should be senior points of contact everywhere.

How important is your working relationship with national team director Rudi Voller?

I look at Rudi Voller as part of the coaching team. He has a very positive influence on the team and that is of great value to us. We communicate well and this healthy exchange of ideas is very important.

Nick Bidwell



TACTICS

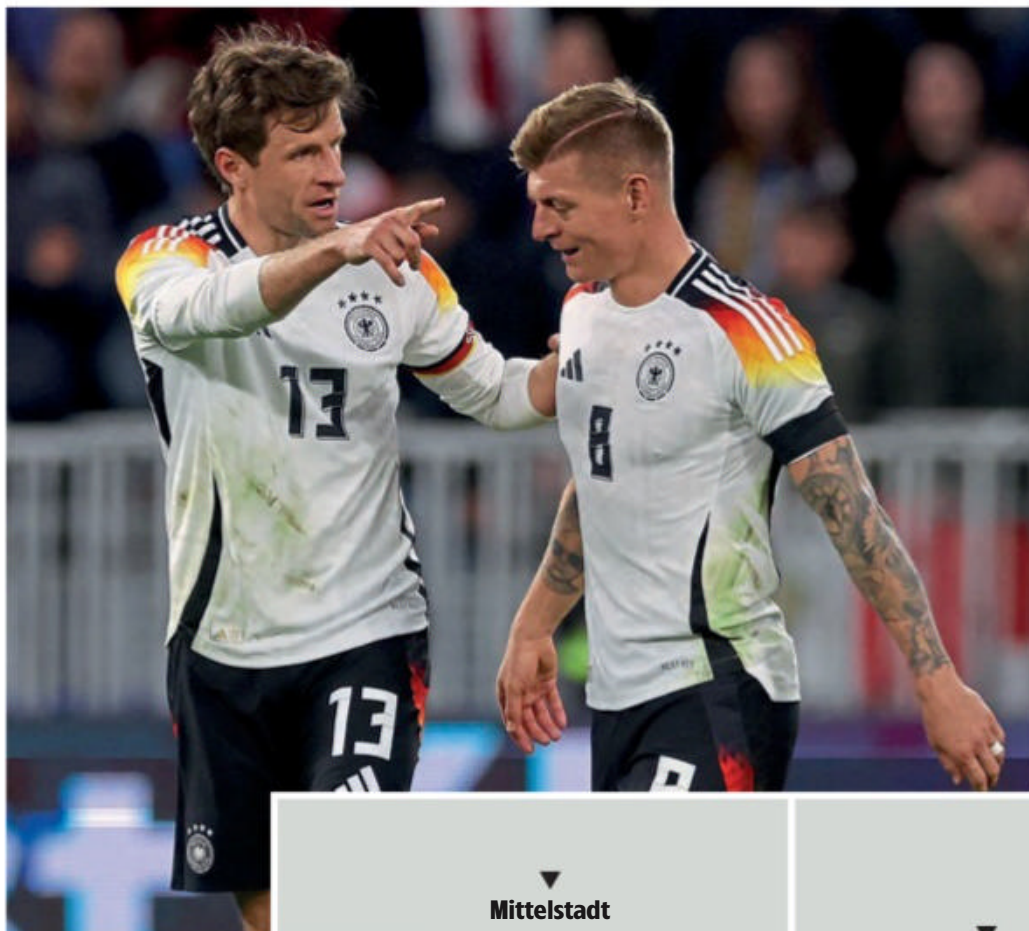
Forceful, fluid and possession-based

After experimenting with formations in the early part of his reign, Nagelsmann looks likely to go with a 4-2-3-1 at the Euros. The system was a huge success in the 2-0 friendly win in France in March, which was Germany's most convincing display for some considerable time – a masterclass in possession football, fluidity and clever, forceful pressing.

The midfield appeared much more balanced. The two holding midfielders, engine-room linker and thinker Toni Kroos and the industrious Robert Andrich, dovetailed perfectly, providing the best possible platform for the attack-minded advanced guard made up of bright young things Florian Wirtz and Jamal Musiala and the always enterprising Ilkay Gundogan.

Kai Havertz looks set to be the freewheeling leader of the line, with the more muscular presence of striker Niclas Fullkrug used from the bench. Joshua Kimmich, whose best position is always a matter of heated debate in Germany, will have to make do with the right-back slot rather than his favourite role as dynamic central midfielder.

In possession, the Germans slip into a 3-1-5-1, with the full-backs pushing on and Andrich decamping to central defence.



Experienced duo...Thomas Müller and Toni Kroos



Freewheeling forward... Kai Havertz

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 3
v **Ukraine**
(h, Nuremberg)
Jun 7
v **Greece** (h,
Monchengladbach)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 14
v **Scotland**
(Munich)
Jun 19
v **Hungary**
(Stuttgart)
Jun 23
v **Switzerland**
(Frankfurt)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM GERMANY



"We need structure and stability in that central department where we have to win duels. It's worth remembering the part defensive midfielders Dieter Eilts and Steffen Freund played in our European Championship success in 1996. We have to look at Robert Andrich, Rani Khedira and Pascal Gross."

Fredi Bobic, ex-Germany striker



"We're not badly off with someone like Niclas Fullkrug up front, but we find ourselves quite a way off world-class standard. Unlike England, we don't have a Harry Kane. This makes it all the more important that all the other positions are ideally catered for in a 4-2-3-1"

Olaf Thon, 1990 World Cup winner



COACH

Julian NAGELSMANN

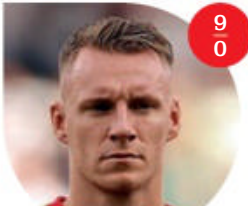
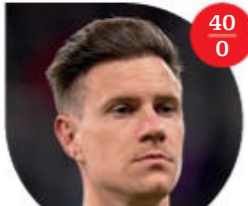
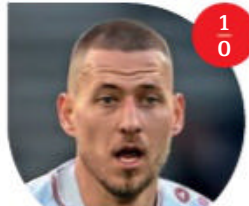
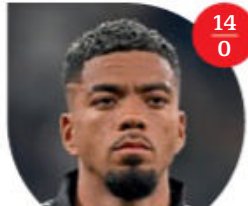
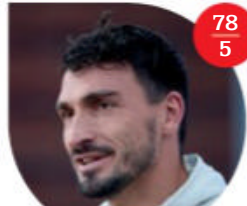
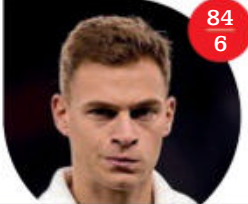
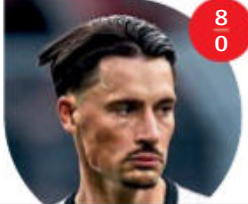
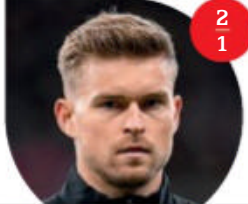
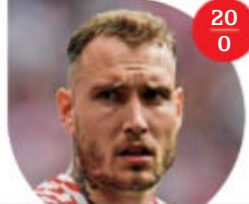
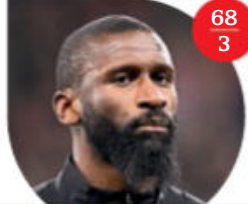
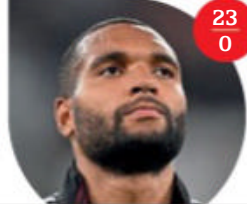
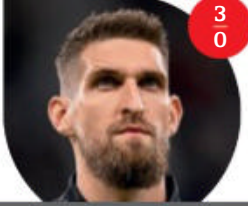
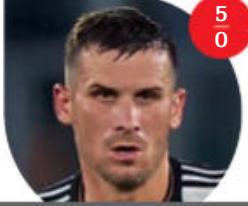
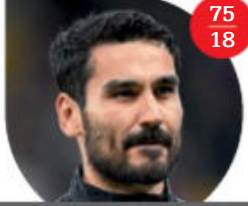
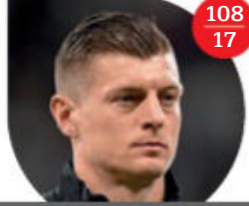
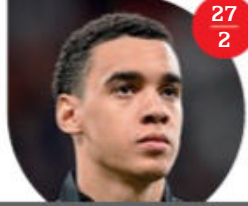
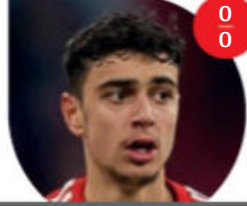
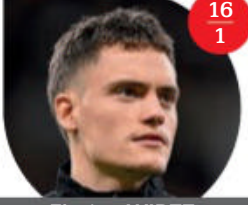
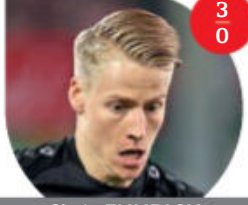
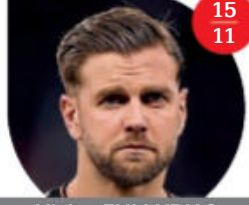
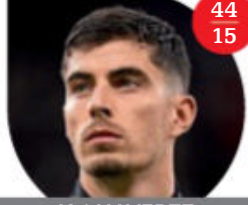
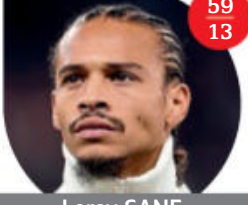
Age 36 (23.07.87)

Appointed September 2023

Germany's second-youngest ever boss, whose reputation as a coaching prodigy took a hit when fired by Bayern Munich in March last year after only 20 months in charge. With his successor Thomas Tuchel arguably experiencing even more problems in Bavaria and on the last lap of his farewell tour, Nagelsmann's work there – and in particular a healthy 71.4 per cent win rate – is now seen in a much less critical light. Renowned for his extreme tactical flexibility, he first made a name for himself as a "Baby Trainer" with Hoffenheim and RB Leipzig.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Bernd LENO Fulham (Eng) Age 32 (04.03.92) After Arsenal sold him in the summer of 2022, Leno has been a man on a mission at Fulham. A great shot-stopper and likely to edge out Baumann and Trapp.	 Manuel NEUER Bayern Munich Age 38 (27.03.86) Despite precious few national team starts since breaking his leg in a skiing accident at the end of 2022, the sweeper-keeper remains a key figure for Germany.	 Marc-Andre TER STEGEN Barcelona (Spa) Age 32 (30.04.92) Unfortunately to still be living in Neuer's shadow. Has improved year-on-year in a decade of wonderful service to Barca and an outstanding deputy should Neuer suffer any setbacks.	 Waldemar ANTON Stuttgart Age 27 (20.07.96) Stuttgart skipper and defensive organiser who combines physicality with solid distribution. Born in Uzbekistan, he won the U21 Euros with Germany in 2017.	 Benjamin HENRICH RB Leipzig Age 27 (23.02.97) Previously with Leverkusen and Monaco, the purposeful right-back with Ghanaian roots has made huge strides this season. The back-up in a troublesome position for Germany over the years.	 Mats HUMMELS Borussia Dortmund Age 35 (16.12.88) The veteran centre-back, a 2014 World Cup winner, still has much to offer – in particular his experience and knowhow – provided he accepts a back-up role to Tah and Rudiger.
	 Joshua KIMMICH Bayern Munich Age 29 (08.02.95) Highly-competitive heart and soul right-back or midfielder who would mow the pitch and drive the team bus if he could. Set to revert to full-back following Kroos' return.	 Robin KOCH Eintracht Frankfurt Age 27 (17.07.96) Solid, ball-playing centre-back who, following spells with Freiburg and Leeds, is now Eintracht's rearguard leader. Won all his caps between 2019 and 2021, but set for a reserve brief.	 Maximilian MITTELSTADT Stuttgart Age 27 (18.03.97) In-form left-back whose technique and attacking instincts have been key to Stuttgart's Bundesliga prominence this season. Won his first caps in March and massively impressed.	 David RAUM RB Leipzig Age 26 (22.04.98) The adventurous and dynamic ex-Hoffenheim and Greuther Furth left-back has improved his game no end this season, not least in his positional work and covering.	 Antonio RUDIGER Real Madrid (Spa) Age 31 (03.03.93) The imposing centre-back, so authoritative when playing for Real Madrid, needs to show more for the national team. Germany's most-used defender over the last couple of years.	 Jonathan TAH Bayer Leverkusen Age 28 (11.02.96) Long gone are the days when the powerfully-built centre-back blew hot and cold. The most accurate passer in the Bundesliga, he made his Germany bow as a 20-year-old in 2016.
	 Robert ANDRICH Bayer Leverkusen Age 29 (22.09.94) Not an automatic starter for the Bundesliga champions this term, but Nagelsmann loves the defensive midfielder's uncompromising toughness.	 Pascal GROSS Brighton (Eng) Age 32 (15.06.91) Selfless, combative midfielder who represents the "workers" in the squad. Non-stop energy and relish for the dirty work. Finally received his first call-up last autumn aged 32.	 Ilkay GUNDOGAN Barcelona (Spa) Age 33 (24.10.90) Captain and cultured specialist in the art of passing and movement. Has a more offensive brief since the return of Kroos, something he relished at Manchester City.	 Toni KROOS Real Madrid (Spa) Age 34 (04.01.90) Pinpoint passer and peerless engine-room director of operations recently lured out of international retirement. Still integral for his club – how sorely Germany have missed him.	 Jamal MUSIALA Bayern Munich Age 21 (26.02.03) The versatile ex-Chelsea academy pupil has it all: extraordinary technical gifts, elusiveness, pace and elegance. Loves to take the ball on the half turn and drive at players.	 Aleksandar PAVLOVIC Bayern Munich Age 20 (03.05.04) What a breakout season for the defensive midfielder, already in the national team picture after just a handful of Bundesliga starts. Hard-running, technically sound and extremely intelligent.
MIDFIELDERS	 Florian WIRTZ Bayer Leverkusen Age 21 (03.05.03) Already a top-class attacking midfielder with more than a hint of greatness about him. One of the key components behind Leverkusen's runaway title win.	 Jan-Niklas BESTE Heidenheim Age 25 (04.01.99) Bearded wonder left-winger and Heidenheim star man, whose principal stock in trade is his amazing, whipped dead-ball delivery.	 Chris FUHRICH Stuttgart Age 26 (09.01.98) Outstanding for his club this season with goals and assists galore. Excellent in one-on-ones, he is like an inverted Arjen Robben, very dangerous when cutting inside off the left wing.	 Niclas FULLKRUG Borussia Dortmund Age 31 (09.02.93) Goal-hungry old style centre-forward who just three years ago was playing in the German second tier with Werder Bremen. Outstanding international strike-rate.	 Kai HAVERTZ Arsenal (Eng) Age 24 (11.06.99) At his best as a false nine or in an attacking midfield role, Nagelsmann controversially used Havertz at left-back late last year. His intelligence and clever movement helps bring others into play.	 Thomas MULLER Bayern Munich Age 34 (13.09.89) Ever-enthusiastic final-third wanderer, whose intelligence and still flaming desire could be useful from the bench. Ten World Cup goals, but has never scored at the Euros.
	 Leroy SANE Bayern Munich Age 28 (11.01.96) Some have suggested that the tremendously-gifted and lightning-quick former Manchester City winger is too temperamental for Germany. Nagelsmann will ignore the critics.	 Deniz UNDAV Stuttgart Age 27 (19.07.96) Not especially quick or strong in the air, but one of the best poachers in the Bundesliga. On loan at Stuttgart from Brighton following a prolific spell in Belgium with Union SG.				
	FORWARDS					

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Oliver BAUMANN (Hoffenheim), Alexander NUBEL (Stuttgart), Kevin TRAPP (Eintracht Frankfurt)

DEFENDERS

Matthias GINTER (Freiburg), Robin GOSENS (Union Berlin), Thilo KEHRER (Monaco, Fra), Keven SCHLOTTERBECK (Bochum), Nico SCHLOTTERBECK (Borussia Dortmund), Niklas SULE (Borussia Dortmund), Malick THIAW (Milan, Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

Julian BRANDT (Borussia Dortmund), Emre CAN (Borussia Dortmund), Leon GORETZKA (Bayern Munich), Jonas HOFMANN (Bayer Leverkusen), Rani KHEDIRA (Union Berlin), Felix NMECHA (Borussia Dortmund), Grisca PROMEL (Hoffenheim), Rocco REITZ (Borussia Monchengladbach), Angelo STILLER (Stuttgart)

FORWARDS

Karim ADEYEMI (Borussia Dortmund), Maximilian BEIER (Hoffenheim), Marvin DUCKSCH (Werder Bremen), Serge GNABRY (Bayern Munich), Timo WERNER (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng)



Third time lucky?

Back at the Euros for the third time in a row, Hungary are ready to make an impact

Such is the significant progress made by Hungary under popular Italian coach Marco Rossi, few would now consider the Magyars as underdogs at Euro 2024. Unbeaten in all ten games in 2023, surprisingly easy conquerors of England and Germany in the Nations League the year before, Hungary are currently blessed with key players in form in Europe's major leagues.

Top of the class of 2024, of course, is Dominik Szoboszlai. Still only 23, his move to Liverpool last summer has been an unqualified success, making him the first Hungarian to star at an elite club since Ferenc Puskas at Real Madrid six decades ago, with the attacking midfielder bouncing back from injury in March and rejoining the Reds for the closing stages of the season as they looked to give outgoing boss Jurgen Klopp the send-off he deserved.

Equally important at Freiburg, forward Roland Sallai has hit vital and spectacular goals, most notably his stoppage-time equaliser against Lens in the Europa League knockout round play-offs in February. While Sallai's club team-mate Attila Szalai has yet to stamp his mark on the Bundesliga, his understanding with RB Leipzig centre-back Willi Orban, the first name on Rossi's teamsheet after Szoboszlai, should see him start.

RB Leipzig goalkeeper Peter

Hungary are currently blessed with key players in form in Europe's major leagues

Gulacsi reclaimed his place after long-term injury to face down Real Madrid in the Champions League. By contrast, metronomic midfielder Adam Nagy still keeps Hungary ticking despite stints at modest clubs.

Beyond these names familiar from Euro 2020, Hungary has team spirit in spades. Yes, it was Szoboszlai necking palinka brandy with fans in the crowd to celebrate the win over Montenegro that took Hungary to a third straight Euros, but this has been a national movement on and off the pitch since Euro 2016.

Upwards of half a million Hungarians applied for tickets for each of the group



Centre-backs... Attila Szalai and Willi Orban have a good understanding

games in nearby Germany, against the host nation, Scotland and Switzerland. No supporter – or player, for that matter – doubts that coach Rossi is the right man for the job. Recently granted Hungarian nationality, he is currently contracted until the end of 2025, by which time he will have served his adopted country for seven years as national team manager.

His men will walk through walls for him, particularly Union Berlin midfielder Andras Schafer, another key player now back from long-term injury. On a Munich pitch strewn with distraught Hungarians after the 2-2 draw with Germany, Schafer's tearful farewell after his Euro 2020 heroics was immediately acknowledged by this manager of great emotional intelligence. Then only 21, Schafer's time will surely come again, as Rossi astutely surmised.

Peterjon Cresswell



MARCO ROSSI



What are your reflections on qualifying?

We had a really good year with very good results. It was a bit unexpected to finish first in our group because we had been drawn with Serbia. In the end, we achieved the most important target – to qualify for Euro 2024. But of course, football gives no time to reflect on what you have achieved. There are new targets and we have the desire to play a very good European Championship.

Since being in charge you have played with various formations...

In 2018 we started with four defenders. We went to three and then returned to a back four. I don't think that the system is making a difference. The principles are what matters. Of course, it's important for the players that they are comfortable, or at least in a system in which they could be more involved and more confident. We are indeed playing with three central defenders. At the last European Championship, we played a 3-5-2. After the tournament, we introduced the 3-4-2-1 and our players are a fit for this system.

Peter Gulacsi was out for almost a year with a knee injury before returning last September. Who will be your number one?



Team spirit...Dominik Szoboszlai joins Hungary fans in celebration after securing qualification

Well, I can't say. Gulacsi is the goalkeeper of RB Leipzig, playing at the top level. He played against Real Madrid and did really well. Gulacsi is used to playing at this level. On the other hand, Denes Dibusz is a very good goalkeeper at Ferencvaros. He has done well both for club and country – in the qualifiers as well as in the Nations League. Based on this, it's another decision I will have to take.

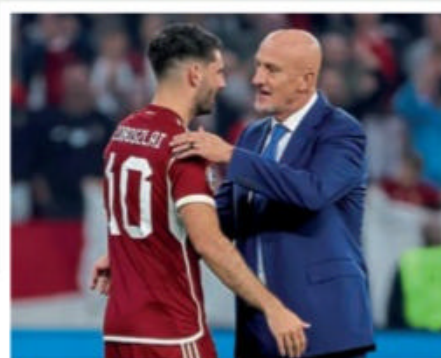
Is the left centre-back position a concern? That's one of the reasons for calling up Marton Dardai. We always counted on Attila Szalai, who hasn't been playing much at Hoffenheim [now on loan at Freiburg]. That could be a problem because without match rhythm

it is difficult. At the same time, he is the only central defender in that position to have played more than 40 matches for us. There are pros and cons in both cases. We will see who can give us the most confidence.

Is there a danger you will be over-reliant on Dominik Szoboszlai?

Szoboszlai is our most important player, our top player together with Roland Sallai. They are playing in our system with Roland in a much more offensive role, while Dominik has more freedom to decide which side or which position he takes. He is a key player, for sure.

Key man...Dominik Szoboszlai with Rossi



What are your thoughts on Group A?

All three teams are strong with different characteristics. Germany have fantastic players. Every time, even if they are in a difficult moment for different reasons, they have always found solutions. Switzerland are an elite team with a lot of experience and a lot of qualities. We are together at the level of Scotland, who have very good players – more or less all of them play in the English Premier League or the Championship. To get out of our group, we will need to play fantastic football. It won't be easy.

Samindra Kunti



TACTICS

Solid back three behind a maestro

Rossi sticks to a back three, protected by a line of four across the first row of midfield. The wing-backs raid the flanks as much as the game allows, particularly Milos Kerkez. Ahead, two attack-minded midfielders must cover as well as create. Given the young dynamic of the profiles, stamina shouldn't be an issue. Rossi prefers one up front, although Sallai just behind is effectively a forward.

Goalkeeper Dibusz stood in so long for the injured Gulacsi that familiarity might give him the nod. Adam Lang can cover the right or centre of defence. If Loic Nego plays as the right wing-back, his speed might allow for a slower man behind. Lang is most capable at defending corners, while Orban commands the backline.

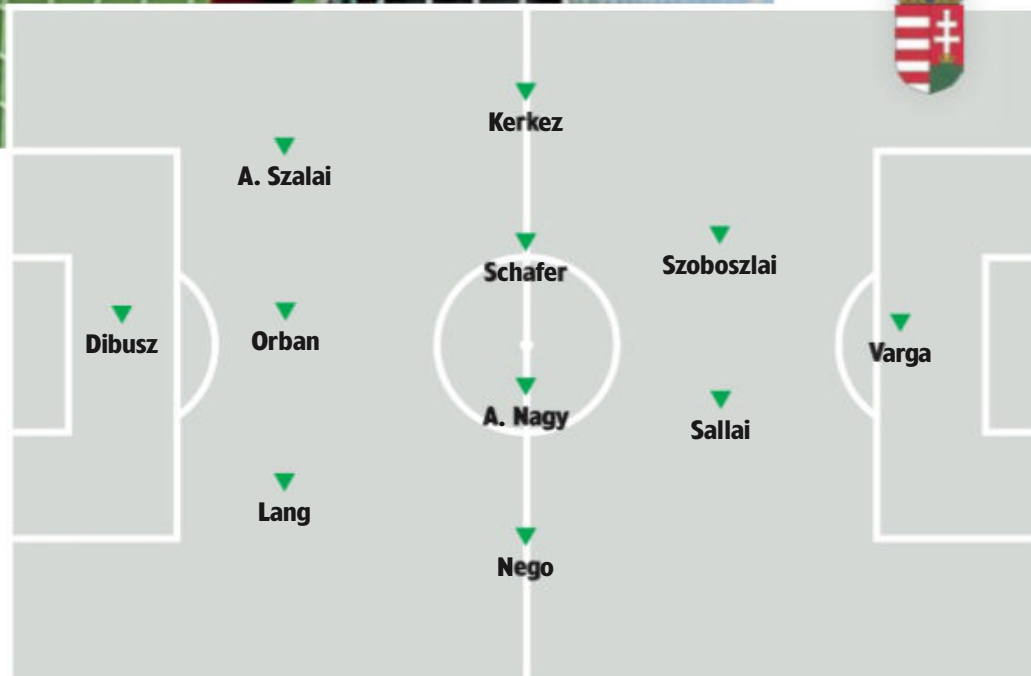
Tucked inside the right flank, Adam Nagy links defence and attack, making short, vital passes. To his left, the combative Callum Styles may suit certain games, but Rossi would be loath to do without the motivated and more creative Schafer.

Dead-ball maestro Szoboszlai patrols great swathes of left midfield, with the menacing Sallai to his right. Barnabas Varga will probably start up front, with the bullish Martin Adam a defender's nightmare with 20 minutes to go.



In-form striker...
Barnabas Varga

Familiarity... Denes Dibusz has stood in brilliantly for the injured Peter Gulacsi



SCHEDULE

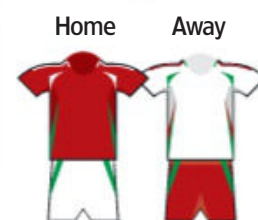
FRIENDLIES

Jun 4 v
Republic of Ireland
(a, Dublin)
Jun 8
v **Israel**
(h, Debrecen)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 15
v **Switzerland**
(Cologne)
Jun 19
v **Germany**
(Stuttgart)
Jun 23
v **Scotland**
(Stuttgart)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM HUNGARY



"This positive period for Hungary began at Euro 2016, but it's hard to compare our side and this one. There's certainly a great chemistry between Marco Rossi and the players. Roland Sallai has been in great form for Freiburg – this is now his chance to perform on the world stage."

Roland Juhasz, ex-Hungary defender



"Rossi has been given the time to earn the players' trust, building an organised defence around Willi Orban. Hungary showed in the Nations League they can beat Europe's best, so they won't be afraid of anybody, but they seem to have struggled against mid-ranking sides."

Zsolt Somogyi, Nemzeti Sport



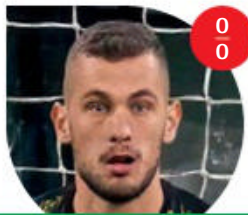
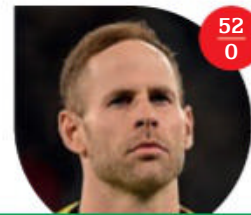
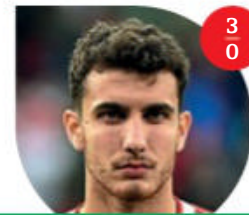
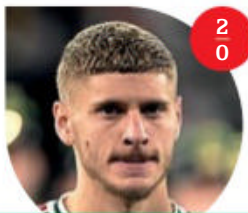
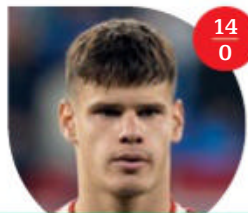
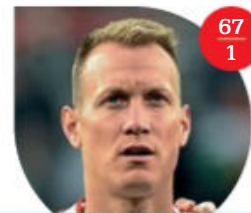
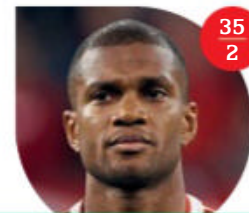
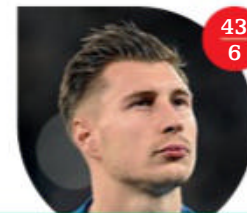
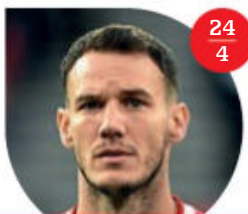
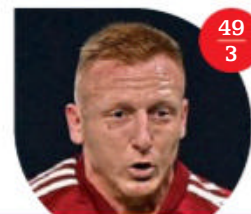
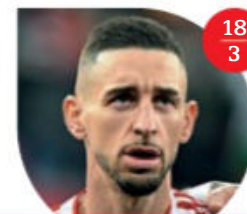
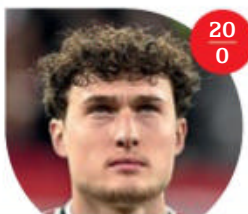
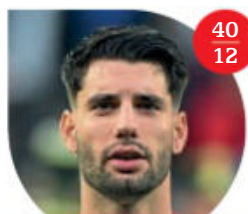
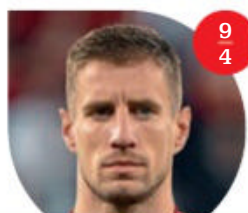
COACH

Marco ROSSI (Ita)
Age 59 (09.09.64)
Appointed June 2018

Successful yet humble, thorough yet easy-going, motivational Rossi captured Hungarian hearts long before he accepted the national job. Taking Honved to a long-awaited title the year before, he has been the voice of reason as billions have been pumped into the Hungarian game for prestige and political purpose. Rossi does what he demands of his players: he sticks to his job. His team works miracles to stifle more illustrious opposition, his midfield paves the way for Szoboszlai to gallivant and his defence now links together like the Chain Bridge over the Danube.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Patrik DEMJEN MTK Budapest Age 26 (22.03.98) An academy graduate at MTK, the former Hungary Under-21 regular put in three top-tier seasons at Zalaegerszeg before returning to Budapest.	 Denes DIBUSZ Ferencváros Age 33 (16.11.90) Hungary's No.1 during Gulacsi's long absence, the veteran of many Ferencváros European campaigns and ever-present in Euro 2024 qualifying may well get the nod in Germany.	 Peter GULACSI RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 34 (06.05.90) Sidelined for a year from autumn 2022 with an ACL injury, the mainstay of Euro 2020 has serious Bundesliga experience but may struggle to regain his place ahead of Dibusz.	 Botond BALOGH Parma (Ita) Age 21 (06.06.02) Regular action with Parma in Serie B has put the tall centre-back into contention, partly thanks to his versatility. Started the final Euro qualifier v Montenegro.	 Bendeguz BOLLA Servette (Sui) Age 24 (22.11.99) A free-scoring right-back at club level who is fully established in the Swiss Super League and also Hungary's national set-up as an off-the-bench option or alternative to Nego.	 Endre BOTKA Ferencváros Age 29 (25.08.94) Solid right-back at Ferencváros after winning the league title under Marco Rossi at Honved in 2017. Currently ahead of Attila Fiola, with the latter just recovering from injury.
	 Marton DARDAI Hertha Berlin (Ger) Age 22 (12.02.02) Will provide cover for Attila Szalai if his lack of minutes at club level are deemed to harm his starting prospects. Won caps for Germany at youth level, while his father Pal coaches his club, Hertha.	 Milos KERKEZ Bournemouth (Eng) Age 20 (07.11.03) Much is expected of the left-sided prospect, once on Milan's books and now a regular in the Premier League. Started all but one Euro 2024 qualifier. Very quick and direct.	 Adam LANG Omonia Nicosia (Cyp) Age 31 (17.01.93) Euro 2016 veteran, and a non-playing member of the squad in 2021, the centre-back can play on the right side if called upon. Has a very good understanding with Orban.	 Loic NEGRO Le Havre (Fra) Age 33 (15.01.91) A regular on the right flank for his naturalised country, Nantes academy graduate Negro won the Under-19 European Championship with France back in 2010.	 Willi ORBAN RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 31 (03.11.92) Injured for the first part of 2023-24, the defensive lynchpin chose his father's country over his birth one of Germany, whom he represented at U21 level. An imposing presence.	 Attila SZALAI Freiburg (Ger) Age 26 (20.01.98) His club career has stalled in Germany, but he should retain his left-sided role in Hungary's defence. Played every minute of qualifying alongside keeper Dibusz and skipper Szoboszlai.
	 Daniel GAZDAG Philadelphia Union (USA) Age 28 (02.03.96) MLS success has brought the attacking midfielder into the frame at international level, linking up with Szoboszlai and not afraid to score goals.	 Mihaly KATA MTK Budapest Age 22 (13.04.02) The central midfielder has successfully made the step-up from the U21 side. Could be vying with fellow youngsters Krisztofer Horvath and Peter Barath for a squad place.	 Laszlo KLEINHEISLER Hajduk Split (Cro) Age 30 (08.04.94) While his globetrotting club career has flagged, the fiery hero of Euro 2016 remains part of Marco Rossi's plans for Euro 2024 – especially with Zsolt Kalmar expected to be absent with a knee injury.	 Adam NAGY Spezia (Ita) Age 28 (17.06.95) Despite a bafflingly sketchy club career, the breakout star from Euro 2016 remains indispensable in defensive midfield for Hungary as the side's metronome and most-capped current international.	 Zsolt NAGY Puskas Akademia Age 31 (25.05.93) Happy on the left side of defence or midfield, Nagy should prove valuable to the squad in Germany. One of the goalscorers in the famous 4-0 away win against England in 2022.	 Andras SCHAFER Union Berlin (Ger) Age 25 (13.04.99) Returning from injury late in 2023, which ruled him out of the entirety of qualifying, the star of Hungary's heroic effort at Euro 2020 is now shining in Germany. Could slot straight back into the XI.
MIDFIELDERS	 Callum STYLES Sunderland (Eng) Age 24 (28.03.00) Bury-born Styles is valued for his fearlessness. Featured in all but one of the qualifiers and would be unlucky to lose his central midfield place to Schafer. Qualifies for Hungary through his grandparents.	 Dominik SZOBOSZLAI Liverpool (Eng) Age 23 (25.10.00) National team captain and record-breaking wonderboy carries his nation's expectations in Germany this summer. Devastatingly injured on the eve of Euro 2020.	 Martin ADAM Ulsan HD (Kor) Age 29 (06.11.94) Bullish Adam was the runaway top scorer in Hungary's NBI in 2021-22 with 31 goals, earning a move from unheralded Paks to South Korea. Has won two K-League titles.	 Kevin CSOBOTH Ujpest Age 23 (20.06.00) A regular at underachieving Ujpest, the one-time Benfica forward is the man to bring on when you're chasing the game – just as he was often used during qualifying.	 Andras NEMETH Hamburg (Ger) Age 21 (09.11.02) Reserve status at Hamburg does the South African-born striker few favours, but Rossi likes the look of the Under-21 regular. Has also played in Belgium for Genk and Lommel.	 Roland SALLAI Freiburg (Ger) Age 27 (22.05.97) Absolute dynamite for Bundesliga outfit Freiburg, Sallai is pretty certain to start in Germany – and a fair bet to score. Crucial in attack and loves roaming from his withdrawn role.
	 Zalan VANCSEA Lommel (Bel) Age 19 (27.10.04) Good form in Belgium's second tier – racking up double figures for goals – has pushed the teenager higher up Rossi's pecking order, granting him another sub appearance in March.	 Barnabas VARGA Ferencváros Age 29 (25.10.94) Replacing Adam at Paks to become Hungary's top league scorer in 2022-23, Varga has since hit a goal a game for Ferencváros. Will lead the line this summer thanks to his prolific form.	FORWARDS ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Krisztian HEGYI (Den Bosch, Ned), Peter SZAPPANOS (Paks), Balazs TOTH (Fehervar) DEFENDERS Janos FERENCZI (Debrecen), Attila FIOLA (Fehervar), Attila MOCSI (Caykur Rizespor, Tur), Gabor SZALAI (Lausanne-Sport, Sui) MIDFIELDERS Peter BARATH (Rakow Czestochowa, Pol), Zsolt KALMAR (Fehervar) – injured, Soma SZUHODOVSZKI (Debrecen), Balint VECSEI (unattached) FORWARDS Krisztofer HORVATH (Kecskemet)			



Holders but far from favourites

Italy are not the team they were in 2021, but the defending champions cannot be written off

It is difficult to be as confident about Italy's chances ahead of the upcoming European Championship as on the eve of Euro 2020. That team arrived at the last finals on the back of a sparkling qualifying campaign, with consistency in selection and formation, and solid preparation, all of which carried them to the trophy.

This current side comes into Euro 2024 on the back of a traumatic and turbulent three years, which have seen the *Azzurri* fail to qualify for the Qatar World Cup, lose their coach Roberto Mancini to Saudi Arabia after just two games of their European Championship qualifying campaign, and then finish a clear second best to old rivals England in their group.

England not only finished a comfortable six points clear of Italy, beating them 2-1 away and 3-1 at home, but the *Azzurri* squeezed through as second-placed qualifiers only thanks to a superior goal difference over war-torn Ukraine. Since then, in an attempt to improve matters, they have experimented with their formation, leading to further uncertainty and more unanswered questions.

In the midst of all that, off-field matters haven't helped with some squad members finding themselves involved in a betting scandal during last

You might be tempted to write off the Italians – not so fast

October's team camp at Coverciano.

At this point, you might be tempted to write off the Italians – not so fast. Two things suggest that you ignore Italy at your peril. Firstly, the four-time World Cup winners and two-time European champions have an impressive finals tournament record. The second and most important point in Italy's favour is coach Luciano Spalletti. Not only does he come from the classic, winning Italian coaching school that gave us the likes of Capello, Mancini, Ancelotti, *et al*, but, in an emergency, he also stepped into the breach of the Italian job just days before two vital qualifiers and



At the top of his game...
Luciano Spalletti

still got them to Germany, avoiding the dreaded play-offs. Moreover, Spalletti worked a total masterpiece at Napoli in the 2022-23 campaign, playing high-octane, intensely focused football to win the Serie A title. In short, he is by far the best man for the Italy job, currently at the top of his game.

As always, the coach's major task will be psychological. He will have to convince his new-look team of young and old – Euro 2020 winners (maybe a dozen of them) and little capped players – that they can perform to the best of Italian traditions. A tough opening round draw – which sees Italy face Albania,

Spain and Croatia in that order in Group B – will not help his cause, but there will be no shortage of belief.

Paddy Agnew



LUCIANO SPALLETTI



You have called on players not to bring their PlayStations with them to training camp. Can you explain that more?

You lot [the media] have written everything imaginable about this. Look, I don't give a damn about PlayStations... what interests me is that, at a certain hour, players try to get some sleep. When I find out that a certain player was awake all night before the Ukraine qualifier, I absolutely won't have that. If a player does something that does not respect his profession, I won't have it.

Are we wrong to get the impression that *Ciro Immobile* is no longer the automatic first choice centre-forward for you?

I don't want to mess around with anyone. Immobile has been an important player both for his club, Lazio, and for Italy. But at the moment, I don't think he is playing to his best so I am looking at other options. Gianluca Scamacca has missed a lot [through injury], but obviously I need in-form players who can give it everything immediately in the first game. It is part of our history that somebody new emerges for Italy. One of the new players is [Lorenzo] Lucca and I want to have a good look at him and see what he is



Relieved...Italy's players celebrate after edging out Ukraine to qualify

made of. He's very tall, good in the air, the sort of player who can make an impact on a game in a few minutes.

How important is Euro 2020 winner Federico Chiesa for Italy?

He is a very good striker, one of those players who can beat his man one-on-one. He is also a goalscorer and has huge self-belief. With Italy, he has to adapt his game and play in the half-spaces between out-and-out striker and just behind the frontline, neither on the left nor on the right. He is versatile enough to do this, and for that reason he is an important player for us.

Is there still room in your squad for new names between now and June?

As I see it, it is important that new names, surprises, pop up. For that reason we must keep an open mind. No one is excluded between now and June.

What is the role of someone like Davide Frattesi in your team?

He is an intense, quality player who can run at defences, who attacks them all the time because that is his nature, because he has those lungs,

that vision and that curiosity. But he still has room for improvement because he is a player of infinite quality.

Infinite quality...
Davide Frattesi

How have these first six months as national team coach been? Have you done all you wanted to do?

I am very satisfied with what I have done, but I have more to do. I've learned the way to the training centres of a number of clubs, so it will take me less time the next time I go to check out my players!

Paddy Agnew





TACTICS

Inter influenced

In the days of consternation prompted by Roberto Mancini's shock resignation as Italy coach last August, many commentators immediately saw Luciano Spalletti as the ideal candidate to replace him.

During his tenure, Mancini had changed the *Azzurri's* game into a more offensive, less cautious approach in which constant pressing, a 4-3-3 line-up, defending high up the pitch and 90-minute one-touch football were the aim.

During their 2022-23 title-winning campaign, Napoli, under Spalletti, seemed to be reading from the same tactical hymn sheet. In his six qualifiers in charge, his Italy understandably came nowhere near to Napoli's level but the template was set.

However, in March, Spalletti – clearly influenced by the "Inter block" at the core of the squad – experimented with a three-man defence, a system the *Interisti* blew Serie A away with this season.

Whichever formation Spalletti deploys, expect to see a continuation of attacking full-backs and aggressive but creative midfield terriers. Up front, there is no Riva or Rossi-like figurehead, so the make-up could vary, with several attackers – and all of differing profiles – vying to start.



Creativity...Nicolo Zaniolo joins Inter midfielders Davide Frattesi and Nicolo Barella in celebration



Attacking full-backs...Giovanni Di Lorenzo and Federico Dimarco



SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Turkey**
(h, Bologna)
Jun 9 v **Bosnia & Herzegovina**
(h, Empoli)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 15
v **Albania**
(Dortmund)
Jun 20
v **Spain**
(Gelsenkirchen)
Jun 24
v **Croatia**
(Leipzig)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM ITALY



"Even though the team is not bad, it has drawn a difficult group – Spain is Spain and Croatia have a great tournament record. I think Italy could end up getting through as one of the best third-place finishers. After that, when Spalletti gets a chance to work further with his players, he may come up with something good."

Fabio Licari, La Gazzetta dello Sport



"They are the reigning champions, but since that 2021 win little has gone right. On top of that, this is an average enough Italy that lacks world-class players like we had in the past. In particular, we have no great player up front. Fortunately, in compensation, we do have Spalletti."

Fabrizio Bocca, Bloooooo! il Bar Sport

COACH

Luciano SPALLETTI

Age 65 (07.03.59)

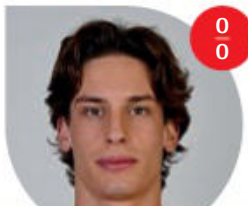
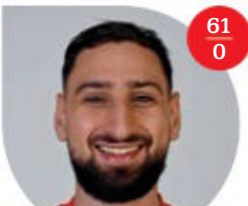
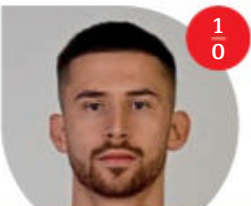
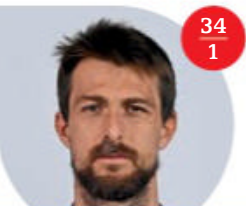
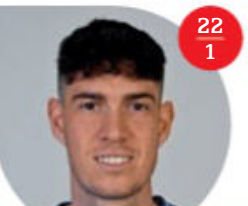
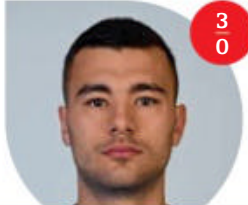
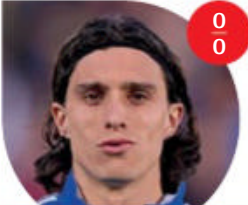
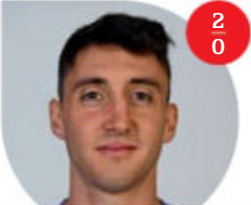
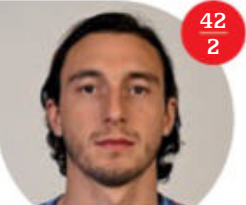
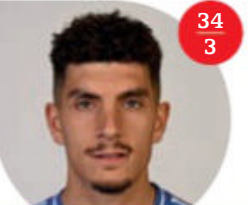
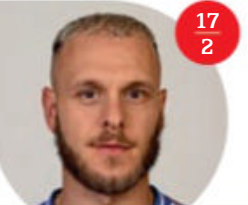
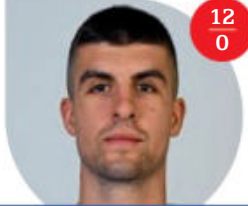
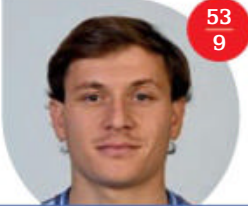
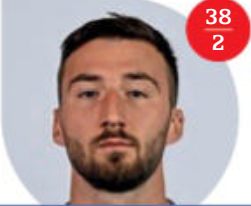
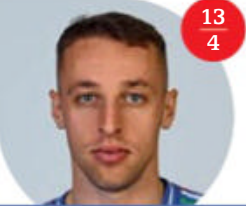
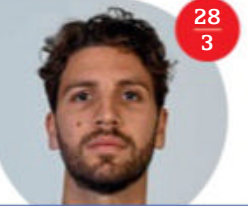
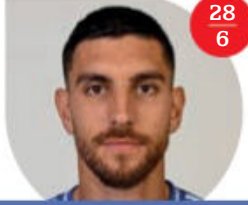
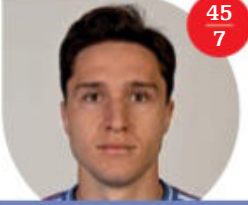
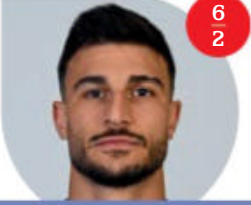
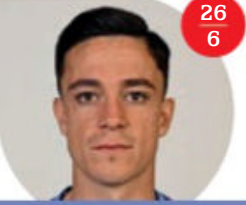
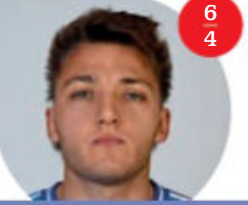
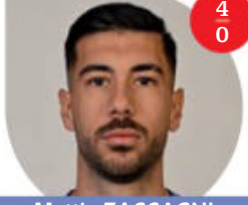
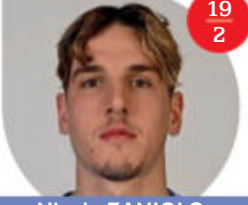
Appointed September 2023



Football fans outside of Italy may not have paid much attention to Spalletti until his historic title win with Napoli, but two Russian league titles with Zenit and three consecutive second-place Serie A finishes with Roma established his credentials long ago. Intelligent, intense, never banal and with the look of a monk who wants to return to his cell, in a news conference he can sometimes seem to be talking about psychotherapy or philosophy rather than football. For him, football is indeed a mind game. Italy's prospects at Euro 2024 may very well depend on him.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Marco CARNESECCHI Atalanta Age 23 (01.07.00) Italian tradition dictates that the third-choice keeper is a promising young talent – <i>a la</i> 20-year-old Gianluigi Buffon at France '98. Carnesecchi fits the bill.	 Gianluigi DONNARUMMA Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 25 (25.02.99) Despite criticism from both PSG and Milan fans, Donnarumma remains an automatic selection for Italy. Player of the Tournament in the Azzurri's triumphant Euro 2020 campaign.	 Guglielmo VICARIO Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) Age 27 (07.10.96) Vicario could be a late entry as back-up goalie after winning his first cap in March. His shot-stopping and playing out from the back have been key for Ange Postecoglou's Spurs.	 Francesco ACERBI Internazionale Age 36 (10.02.88) The experienced centre-back's place was in doubt in March after an alleged racist incident involving Napoli's Juan Jesus. Following his acquittal, he is back in the squad.	 Alessandro BASTONI Internazionale Age 25 (13.04.99) One of many in-form Inter players in the squad, the left-footer can play in the middle or on the left of defence and likes to foray into midfield. A modern defender who picks himself.	 Raoul BELLANOVA Torino Age 24 (17.05.00) The attacking right-back or right-sided midfielder loves beating his man in one-on-ones and has electric pace. Spalletti might spring a surprise by taking a punt on him.		
	 Alessandro BUONGIORNO Torino Age 24 (06.06.99) The centre-back proved his worth with an excellent display in Italy's decisive 0-0 draw with Ukraine. He was, though, far less impressive in March's friendly v Venezuela.	 Riccardo CALAFIORI Bologna Age 22 (19.05.02) Uncapped at senior level, but has had a great season with revelation side Bologna. A quick central defender who can also play at left-back, which could be useful given Destiny Udogie's absence.	 Andrea CAMBIASO Juventus Age 24 (20.02.00) The Genoa alumnus has had a great first season at Juve. His versatility – comfortable as a left or right-sided wing-back – gives him a strong chance of selection.	 Matteo DARMIAN Internazionale Age 34 (02.12.89) His experience, ability to play in a back three or either full-back position, and brilliant club form make him a certain pick and a likely starter – especially if Spalletti leans on the Inter connection.	 Giovanni DI LORENZO Napoli Age 30 (04.08.93) Spalletti's captain at Napoli, Di Lorenzo is the classic "coach on the field". Best suited as an attacking right-back in a back four, but less convincing in a 3-4-2-1.	 Federico DIMARCO Internazionale Age 26 (10.11.97) An attacking left-back and another Inter player who has had an explosive season. Looks nailed on to start – even more so after Spurs' Destiny Udogie was ruled out through injury.		
	MIDFIELDERS	 Gianluca MANCINI Roma Age 28 (17.04.96) Rugged, experienced and imposing centre-back, but his squad place could be vulnerable to Giorgio Scalvini, considered one of the best defenders of his Under-21 generation.	 Nicolo BARELLA Internazionale Age 27 (07.02.97) One of the heroes of Italy's Euro 2020 success, Barella, in his role of attacking right-sided box-to-box midfielder, is crucial for both club and country.	 Bryan CRISTANTE Roma Age 29 (03.03.95) A capable squad player, versatile, tactically canny and able to play in various midfield or defensive roles. Attack-minded alternatives could include Bonaventura, Pessina or Colpani.	 Davide FRATESI Internazionale Age 24 (22.09.99) Attacking midfielder and Italy's top scorer in qualifying with three goals. Used almost exclusively as a sub for Inter this season, so should be fresher than some of his team-mates.	 JORGINHO Arsenal (Eng) Age 32 (20.12.91) Used by Spalletti in Italy's last two Euro qualifiers, the Italo-Brazilian's passing, experience, calmness, leadership, organisation and playmaking skills make him an obvious pick.	 Manuel LOCATELLI Juventus Age 26 (08.01.98) Another key figure at Euro 2020, Locatelli looks like a certainty to be included and could even start in place of Jorginho if Spalletti opts for a different profile in the regista role.	
		FORWARDS	 Lorenzo PELLEGRINI Roma Age 27 (19.06.96) A quality attacking midfielder with a good goal record, the Roma captain has been a key figure in the club's recent revival. Withdrew from the Euro 2020 squad through injury the day before kick-off.	 Federico CHIESA Juventus Age 26 (25.10.97) Right-footed winger but comfortable on either side, the Euro 2020 champion remains a dangerous, pacy attacker despite an ACL injury that ruled him out for ten months in 2022.	 Riccardo ORSOLINI Bologna Age 27 (24.01.97) A key figure in Thiago Motta's exciting Bologna team, the left-footed right-winger has technique and pace. His prospects have increased after injury to Domenico Berardi.	 Giacomo RASPADORI Napoli Age 24 (18.02.00) One of the survivors of the Euro 2020-winning squad, who seems to have come through Napoli's difficult season relatively unscathed. Nimble, mobile and brings a lot of movement to the attack.	 Mateo RETEGUI Genoa Age 25 (29.04.99) Two goals in March versus Venezuela suggest that the naturalised Argentine-born centre-forward could be rediscovering his best form at just the right time. May be Spalletti's first choice.	 Gianluca SCAMACCA Atalanta Age 25 (01.01.99) Offers something different in attack and will press Retegui hard after a hot scoring streak in the spring. The mercurial ex-West Ham striker also played youth football for PSV.
			 Mattia ZACCAGNI Lazio Age 28 (16.06.95) Started Spalletti's first two matches in charge and was in form all season before an ankle injury in April. Able to play behind the striker or on the left wing, he is a regular assist man and a good crosser.	 Nicolo ZANILO Aston Villa (Eng) Age 24 (02.07.99) With a squad not exactly packed with world-class attackers, Spalletti can ill-afford to lose a talent like Zaniolo. Ex-Roma prodigy now starting to find his feet in England.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Michele DI GREGORIO (Monza), Alex MERET (Napoli), Ivan PROVEDEL (Lazio) DEFENDERS Cristiano BIRAGHI (Fiorentina), Davide CALABRIA (Milan), Matteo GABBIA (Milan), Federico GATTI (Juventus), Michael KAYODE (Fiorentina), Alessio ROMAGNOLI (Lazio), Matteo RUGGERI (Atalanta), Giorgio SCALVINI (Atalanta), Leonardo SPINAZZOLA (Roma), Destiny UDOGIE (Tottenham Hotspur, Eng) – <i>injured</i> MIDFIELDERS Giacomo BONAVENTURA (Fiorentina), Andrea COLPANI (Monza), Giovanni FABBIAN (Bologna), Michael FOLORUNSHO (Verona), Gianluca GAETANO (Cagliari), Matteo PESSINA (Monza), Samuele RICCI (Torino), Nicolo ROVELLA (Lazio) FORWARDS Domenico BERARDI (Sassuolo) – <i>injured</i>, Stephan EL SHAARAWY (Roma), Wilfried GNONTO (Leeds United, Eng), Vincenzo GRIFO (Freiburg, Ger), Ciro IMMOBILE (Lazio), Moise KEAN (Juventus), Lorenzo LUCCA (Udinese), Andrea PINAMONTI (Sassuolo), Matteo POLITANO (Napoli)			



Repeating history

The Dutch are hoping to replicate history and have another tournament to remember on German soil

For the Netherlands, there is something special about tournaments in neighbouring Germany. The defeat to the hosts in the 1974 World Cup final caused a national trauma, but it did gift to the world the famous Total Football played by Johan Cruyff and co. Then, at Euro 1988, the Dutch got their revenge when, with Rinus Michels again at the helm, *Oranje* won their only major trophy to date with a team containing superstar players like Marco van Basten and Ruud Gullit. And finally, at the 2006 World Cup – the last time Germany hosted a major international tournament – we saw the notorious “Battle of Nuremberg” with the Netherlands’ clash against Portugal featuring no fewer than 16 yellow cards and four reds.

Could this be yet another tournament to remember for the Dutch, with Ronald Koeman – now in his second stint as national team head coach – aiming to become only the second man, after Germany’s Berti Vogts, to win the Euros as both a player and a manager? At the moment, the chances look slim.

When Koeman first arrived back in 2018, the national team was at an all time low. They had failed to qualify for two consecutive major tournaments and players like Wesley Sneijder and Arjen Robben were calling it a day. The ex-Ajax, PSV, Feyenoord and Barcelona player,

Could this be yet another tournament to remember for the Dutch? At the moment, the chances look slim

who won 78 caps in a distinguished playing career, built a new team with talents like Virgil van Dijk, Frenkie de Jong and Memphis Depay and restored national pride. *Oranje* finished runners-up in the inaugural Nations League and qualified for Euro 2020, only for Koeman to leave before the tournament kicked off to join Barcelona.

Since returning at the start of last year, Koeman has been faced with more questions than answers. For instance, who will be the goalkeeper? Andries Noppert, No.1 at the last World Cup, is completely out of form and warming the bench at mid-table Heerenveen;



Dutch boss...Koeman delivers instructions to his team

Bart Verbruggen and Mark Flekken are playing regularly in the Premier League but are inexperienced; veteran Jasper Cillessen, who Koeman immediately called upon on his return, has probably missed his chance. The strongest contender may be Justin Bijlow, but the Feyenoord man would be a big risk having missed so much of the season through injury.

There are also issues at the other end of the pitch, with Depay also suffering injury problems. His replacement, Wout Weghorst, has passion and work-rate in abundance but lacks elite-level class, while Xavi Simons seldom shows his excellent club form for the national team. Further back, there is no obvious midfield partner for De Jong, while Ajax’s disastrous season hasn’t helped matters.

With so many unanswered questions, maybe this particular German-hosted tournament will be one to forget for the Dutch.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

RONALD KOEMAN



What are you trying to emphasise during your second reign as national team coach?

Compared to my first period, much has, of course, remained the same. Most players are further along in their development and have experienced a lot at their clubs that has helped them grow. And they also have tournament experience after the European Championship in 2021 and the 2022 World Cup. Of course, you change your emphasis over the years, that also depends on the players you have at your disposal. But my vision of how I want the Dutch team to play

has remained the same. As Dutch, we always want to see attractive football, with initiative.

How do you rate this generation of players?

We have an excellent squad. Many are friends and that bond pays off. Several have lots of experience, while we also have great talent. Just look at the central defenders: I don’t think many countries can choose from five or six players who play in that position at the very highest level. Up front, it’s a bit different, but I have a lot of confidence in the attackers.

Can one expect and demand more from Frenkie de Jong in the Dutch team?

I think that Frenkie is performing excellently.



Dutch delight...
Netherlands celebrate
a goal on German soil
in a friendly in March

Unfortunately, he has been injured a lot in the past year, which caused him to miss many qualifiers. With Frenkie de Jong on the field, every team plays football more easily.

How do you view Group D?

France are one of the title favourites, we can be brief about that. We saw how good they are in our qualifying group. Poland have been a good football country for years, with one of the best strikers in the world in Robert Lewandowski. And don't underestimate Austria. They have achieved excellent results and are much stronger than everyone thinks. All in all, I think we have a tough group and I think we have to work hard.

The previous Euros was a disappointment. What is the team's objective this summer?

We have to participate with the aim of winning the tournament. And with a fit and fresh group of players, I firmly believe that this is possible. Of course, everything has to go well – I sometimes think back to the golden European Championship of the Netherlands in 1988; we had a great team at the time and we could play fantastic football, but luck also gave us a helping hand at decisive moments. We are not favourites, but we are one of the countries that I would like to call "contenders".

Back in the hot seat...Koeman at his unveiling in January 2023



Who are the favourites to win?

For me, France, Spain and Germany. They have large, strong squads. France and Spain have achieved very good results in recent years, while Germany seem to be on the way back after a difficult 2023. They, of course, also have home advantage, which you should not underestimate during a final tournament. But luckily the Netherlands is next to Germany, so I hope for the support of many Dutch fans this summer. I hope we can get the most out of it. And who knows what is possible.

Samindra Kunti



TACTICS

Questions to answer

Ronald Koeman is known for his pragmatism, and therefore will adjust his tactics depending on the opponent. That could mean 4-3-3 against Poland in the opener, or 5-3-2 against stronger teams like France.

The base formation, though, is 3-4-3, with Virgil van Dijk and Nathan Ake joined by either Matthijs de Ligt or Stefan de Vrij. Jurrien Timber, who was first choice in Qatar, has missed the majority of the season for Arsenal and, unless he can quickly prove his fitness after recovering from an ACL injury, this tournament will come too soon for him. In this system, wing-backs Denzel Dumfries and Daley Blind are essentially wide midfielders.

Against stronger opponents, Koeman will opt for a third midfielder in place of an attacker, with Mats Wieffer brought in to guard the back three. The right flank is always left vacant for Dumfries' powerful runs, with the right attacker tucked in.

Tijjani Reijnders is in the driver's seat to partner Frenkie de Jong in midfield, with Jerdy Schouten and Joey Veerman – most likely De Jong's understudy – also in contention.

In attack, Cody Gakpo and Memphis Depay will both start, with either Xavi Simons supporting them or Brian Brobbey leading the line as the centre-forward.



Tijjani Reijnders...
Frenkie de Jong's
midfield partner?



Defensive rocks
...Virgil van Dijk
and Nathan Ake

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 6
v **Canada**
(h, Rotterdam)
Jun 10
v **Iceland**
(h, Rotterdam)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 16
v **Poland**
(Hamburg)
Jun 21
v **France**
(Leipzig)
Jun 25
v **Austria**
(Berlin)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM NETHERLANDS



"The problems of this team are up front. When in form, Depay is an important player. But will he be? Brobbey is making progress and has enormous potential. He could be the revelation, I am a fan. Xavi Simons? No, it's too much hype."

*Aad de Mos, pundit and
former Ajax and PSV coach*



"Koeman's dilemma is what will be the ideal midfield. He needs a player with venom who guards the defence to eliminate the opponents' counter. We don't have such players. Opponents can often cross our midfield too easily. That is a stumbling block for Koeman."

Ruud Gullit, Euro '88-winning captain



COACH

Ronald KOEMAN

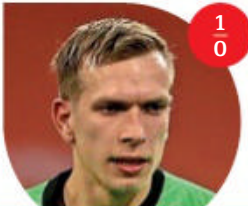
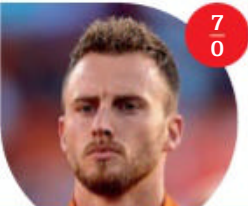
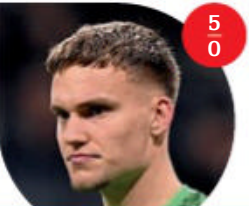
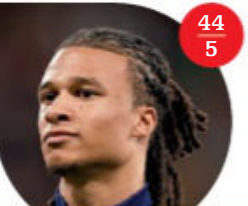
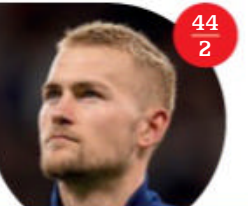
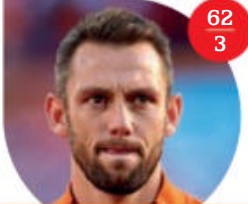
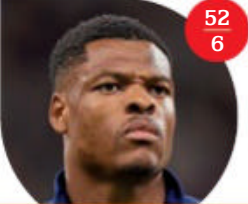
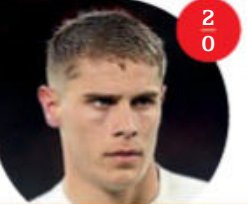
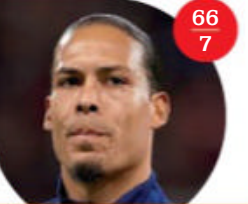
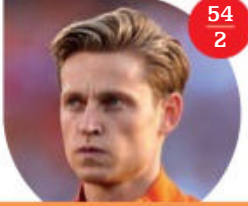
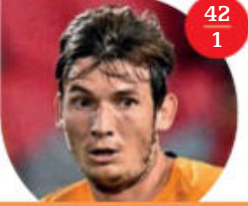
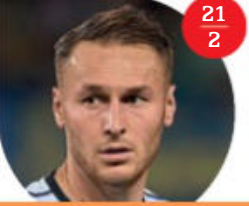
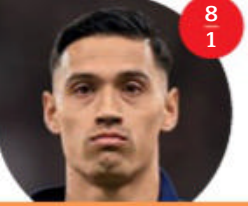
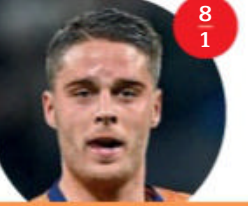
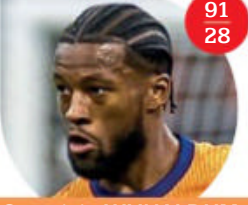
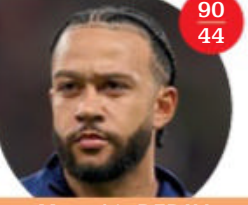
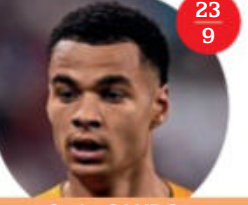
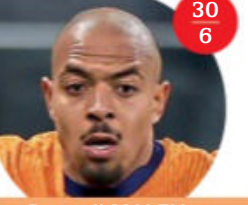
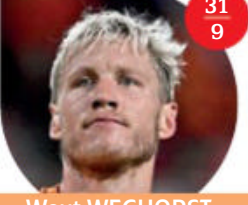
Age 61 (21.03.63)

Appointed January 2023

Now in his second spell in charge of the national team after leaving in 2020 for his dream club, Barcelona, when it was announced that Euro 2020 would be pushed back a year due to COVID. Succeeded Louis van Gaal after the 2022 World Cup because, quite simply, he was the main – and only suitable – candidate. As a player the *libero*, who had a knack of scoring magnificent goals, was a pivotal part of the *Oranje* side that won Euro '88. Far less flamboyant as a coach, he puts results before style of play and doesn't hesitate to openly criticise his players.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Marco BIZOT Brest (Fra) Age 33 (10.03.91) Came through Ajax's ranks, but impressed at AZ with 31 clean sheets in all comps in 2019. A squad member at Euro 2020, but never a candidate under Van Gaal.	 Mark FLEKKEN Brentford (Eng) Age 30 (13.06.93) Van Gaal's "discovery of the year" as the country's best footballing keeper, only to be omitted from the Qatar 2022 squad. Played his whole career in Germany before moving to England.	 Bart VERBRUGGEN Brighton (Eng) Age 21 (18.08.02) The likeliest No.1 given Bijlow's injuries. Played at second-tier NAC Breda before joining Anderlecht. Proved to be a penalty killer in Belgium, which the Dutch love.	 Nathan AKE Manchester City (Eng) Age 29 (18.02.95) Arguably Netherlands' best defender, but took his time to become a key player. Moved to England aged 15, developed slowly and now a starter at the world's best club.	 Daley BLIND Girona (Spa) Age 34 (09.03.90) The team's veteran and best passer. Often written off but always comes back, now enjoying an Indian summer in Spain. Quilindschy Hartman's serious injury means he'll start on the left.	 Matthijs DE LIGT Bayern Munich (Ger) Age 24 (12.08.99) Regarded as one of Europe's most talented centre-backs in his teens, but injury and some reckless decisions stalled his progress. Sent off against Czech Republic at Euro 2020.
	 Stefan DE VRIJ Internazionale (Ita) Age 32 (05.02.92) Experienced centre-back who seldom lets his coach down. Regarded as a top-class defender in Serie A. Surprisingly didn't play a minute at the 2022 World Cup.	 Denzel DUMFRIES Internazionale (Ita) Age 28 (18.04.96) Late bloomer who came through the ranks at Sparta Rotterdam and then Heerenveen before becoming one of the world's best right-backs. Speedy, powerful and a goal threat.	 Jeremie FRIMPONG Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 23 (10.12.00) Moved to England aged seven and formerly on the books of Manchester City and Celtic. A wing-back who loves to burst forward, he has had a magnificent club season packed with goals and assists.	 Lutsharel GEERTRUIDA Feyenoord Age 23 (18.07.00) Aggressive right-back or centre-back. Feyenoord vice-captain. Featured regularly in qualifying and showed his versatility by filling in at left-back for his club following Hartman's knee injury.	 Micky VAN DE VEN Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) Age 23 (19.04.01) Used sparingly by Koeman, but his outstanding club form should see him selected. The fastest player ever recorded in the Premier League, his left foot is also useful.	 Virgil VAN DIJK Liverpool (Eng) Age 32 (08.07.91) Leader of the pack, heading to his first Euros after missing Euro 2020 with a knee injury. More of a fan of Koeman's approach than Van Gaal's. Only Dutchman to start every qualifier.
	 Frenkie DE JONG Barcelona (Spa) Age 27 (12.05.97) Creative lynchpin who can be a wizard in finding solutions on the pitch, but hasn't taken control of his team at big tournaments yet. For the Dutch he is simply irreplaceable.	 Marten DE ROON Atalanta (Ita) Age 33 (29.03.91) Unsung hero who keeps the balance in the team, but often criticised for his technique. For a long time one of the first names on the teamsheet, but now faces stiff competition.	 Teun KOOPMEINERS Atalanta (Ita) Age 26 (28.02.98) Dead-ball specialist. Regular scorer for his club, but for the national team he is often criticised for playing too cautiously. Was a non-playing squad member at Euro 2020.	 Tijani REIJNDERS Milan (Ita) Age 25 (29.07.98) Made an instant impact after joining Milan from AZ. Intelligent and skilful, he looks the best bet to play alongside De Jong. Named after ex-Ajax winger Tijani Babangida.	 Jerdy SCHOUTEN PSV Age 27 (12.01.97) Played at second-tier Telstar and unfashionable Excelsior before making his breakthrough in Italy with Bologna. Can also provide the build-up from central defence.	 Joey VEERMAN PSV Age 25 (19.11.98) A playmaker with exquisite technique. Many doubted him as national team material, but his rapid progress at PSV since leaving Heerenveen in 2022 has proven them wrong.
	 Mats WIEFFER Feyenoord Age 24 (16.11.99) Jumped from second-tier Excelsior to Oranje within just a few months after failing to break through at Twente. Industrious midfielder who keeps the team in balance.	 Georginio WIJNALDUM Al Ettifaq (KSA) Age 33 (11.11.90) Criticism for his move to Saudi Arabia. Unlike Van Gaal, Koeman is a big fan and hopes the tandem of Wijnaldum-Depay can revive old times. Huge success at Liverpool.	 Brian BROBBEY Ajax Age 22 (01.02.02) Robust goal poacher who quickly returned to Ajax just months after joining RB Leipzig. Responded to criticism by Koeman earlier this season with 20+ goals despite Ajax's struggles.	 Memphis DEPAY Atletico Madrid (Spa) Age 30 (13.02.94) Still well on course to surpass Robin van Persie as Netherlands' record goalscorer. Quirky and eccentric. Missed a lot of qualifying as injuries start to take their toll.	 Cody GAKPO Liverpool (Eng) Age 25 (07.05.99) Winger who has also played in midfield and as a false nine for his club. The Netherlands' best player in Qatar. Fast and a good finisher when approaching the box.	 Donyell MALEN Borussia Dortmund (Ger) Age 25 (19.01.99) Speedy attacker who can play on the wing or as a second striker. Would be a certain starter with more composed finishing. Shrugged off several injuries in recent years.
	 Xavi SIMONS RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 21 (21.04.03) Been on the books of Barcelona, PSG, PSV and Leipzig. Moved to Spain aged six. Often used out wide, but at his best behind the striker. Son of former player Regillio.	 Wout WEGHORST Hoffenheim (Ger) Age 31 (07.08.92) Makes up for his limited technique with insatiable work-rate. No player is more proud to play for the national team. Was key in qualifying, standing in admirably for Depay.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Justin BIJLOW (Feyenoord), Jasper CILLESSEN (NEC Nijmegen), Nick OLIJ (Sparta Rotterdam)

DEFENDERS

Sven BOTMAN (Newcastle United, Eng) – *injured*, Quilindschy HARTMAN (Feyenoord) – *injured*, Jorrel HATO (Ajax), Ian MAATSEN (Borussia Dortmund, Ger), Jordan TEZE (PSV), Jurrien TIMBER (Arsenal, Eng), Jan Paul VAN HECKE (Brighton & Hove Albion, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

Steven BERGHUIS (Ajax), Ryan GRAVENBERCH (Liverpool, Eng), Quinten TIMBER (Feyenoord)

FORWARDS

Steven BERGWIJN (Ajax), Thijs DALLINGA (Toulouse, Fra), Noa LANG (PSV), Calvin STENGES (Feyenoord), Crysencio SUMMERVILLE (Leeds United, Eng), Joshua ZIRKZEE (Bologna, Ita)

Late awakening after disaster

Poland will play in their fifth major tournament in a row, but joy has been dampened by a rocky road to the finals

Looking back now, and from a realistic perspective, progress from a group that included Argentina, Mexico and Saudi Arabia at the World Cup in Qatar should have been considered a success for Poland. But immediately after their elimination at the hands of France in the last 16, fans and media were lamenting the defensive style of play and decrying the early exit.

Morale was not improved by a misunderstanding within the team around a bonus payment reportedly promised by then-prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki, which the players ultimately did not receive after a public backlash.

Amid the disastrous atmosphere, the Polish FA chose not to extend coach Czeslaw Michniewicz's contract. He was replaced by the Portuguese Fernando Santos, but this did not sit well with supporters who craved a more offensive style of play – after all, Santos had been criticised on numerous occasions for his defensive and turgid approach while managing a Portugal side packed with attacking talent.

After his appointment in January 2023, Santos was tasked with qualifying



and defender Jan Bednarek admitted: "We thought the game would win by itself and we would go on vacation."

After a 2-0 away defeat to Albania in September, the Polish FA decided enough was enough and Santos' contract was terminated. He was replaced by Michal Probiez who, with three games to go, still had an outside chance of qualifying. Things started positively enough with a 2-0 victory in the Faroe Islands, but hopes were dashed after 1-1 draws with both Moldova and Czech Republic, leaving Poland third in the group.

No-one was laughing anymore. Only in the play-offs did Poland seal their

The win against Wales was received with little fanfare at home, with many believing qualification should have been achieved much earlier

place at Euro 2024, beating Estonia 5-1 at home and, after a goalless draw with Wales, winning 5-4 on penalties in Cardiff. The win was received with little fanfare at home, with many believing qualification should have been achieved much earlier.

A tough draw for the finals pits the Poles against France, Netherlands and Austria. This time, getting to the last 16 should certainly be deemed a success. But for many years in Polish football, the expectations of the fans and media have far exceeded the team's capabilities. Will things be more realistic this time around?

Dariusz Kurowski



MICHAL PROBIERZ



When Polish FA president Cezary Kulesza, previously chairman of your old club Jagiellonia Bialystok, called you about the national team vacancy, did you immediately think about what you should change in the team?

No, because I am too experienced a coach to consider changes when I am not already doing the job. It simply would not make sense. I could only wait for the chairman's decision.

It is often said that becoming national team coach is a dream for every manager.



Shootout victory
...Poland players
react to beating
Wales on penalties

However, it must also have been a huge risk for you because you took over at a very difficult moment...

It is true, it was a difficult moment, but I also knew the potential of this team. And I knew that we could get to Euro 2024. The most important thing is that we achieved this goal.

Did you have any moments of doubt when Poland finished third in the group and you knew you'd have to fight for qualification via the play-offs?

No, because we had problems in the squad at that moment. Several players did not play regularly, several were injured. I knew this could change. And in March, it happened

that practically everyone was healthy and we managed to put it together, so Poland could successfully compete in the play-offs and win them. And I believe that this team will get only get better.

Have the media and supporters been demanding too much from the Poland national team over the years?

Fans have the right to demand a lot. This is my profession and I am aware of it. You have to be able to live with it and accept life as it is.

Poland have been drawn in a very strong group at the Euros...

Victory in Cardiff... Probierz celebrates with his players



At the beginning, before the first match, everyone has zero points. We simply need to be well prepared for each match, and I believe that we will perform well in them.

You have a habit of occasionally smoking a cigar when you achieve success, like after the play-off final in Cardiff. How many cigars will you take with you to Germany?

I approach it a bit differently. I like to play golf and I like to smoke a cigar when I feel a moment to enjoy it. These are two things that are always somewhere close to me in my life.

Dariusz Kurowski

TACTICS

Balanced and pragmatic

Probierz is known for adapting his system to the opposition's playing style. His preference is to play with three centre-backs and a variation of midfielders and forwards who can change positions smoothly, striking a balance between defence and attack.

There has been debate for years about the midfield – how best to provide security to the defence but also offer support for Robert Lewandowski. On many occasions, he is forced to come deep to receive the ball and get involved in the play, taking him away from where he is most dangerous. Because of this dilemma various systems have been deployed, including 4-2-3-1, 4-4-2 and 4-4-1-1, along with several interpretations of three at the back.

When Probierz took over, he said that “the biggest problem is with the midfield” and to solve it he needed “players in form, who play regularly”. His discovery was Jakub Piotrowski, who has seemingly provided a solution given his ability to play as a box-to-box midfielder.

In Probierz's system, the wing-backs also play an important role, particularly in driving attacks, and Nicola Zalewski and Przemyslaw Frankowski performed well in the play-off matches. Much will depend on them and, of course, Lewandowski's prowess in front of goal, if Poland are to make an impact in Germany.



Box-to-box midfielder
...Jakub Piotrowski



Star man...Robert
Lewandowski

SCHEDULE

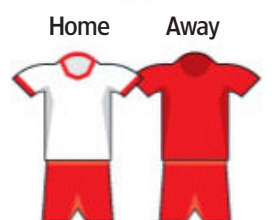
FRIENDLIES

Jun 7
v **Ukraine**
(h, Warsaw)
Jun 10
v **Turkey**
(h, Warsaw)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 16
v **Netherlands**
(Hamburg)
Jun 21
v **Austria**
(Berlin)
Jun 25
v **France**
(Dortmund)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM POLAND



“Even though he was with the Under-21s before, this is completely different and Probierz is still learning his new role. He had to clean it up and rebuild the atmosphere. His selection of players and tactics worked well in the two play-off matches. But getting out of the group will be extremely difficult”

Dariusz Szpakowski, TV commentator



“Poland have players who show their potential at their clubs, but not always for the national team, which is probably the biggest problem. We have very strong rivals in the group, so, assessing this realistically, it will be very, very difficult”

Wladyslaw Zmuda, former Poland defender of 91 caps

COACH



Michal PROBIERZ

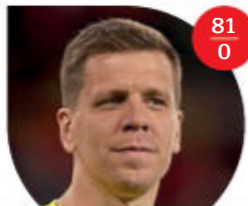
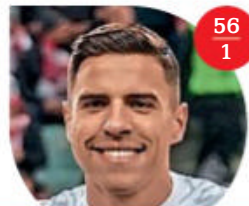
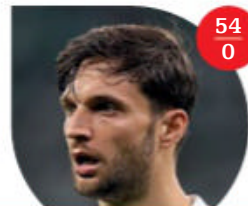
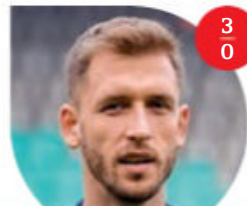
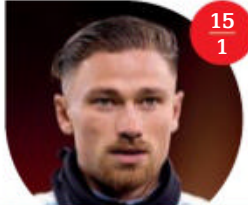
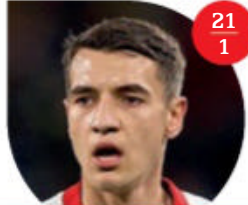
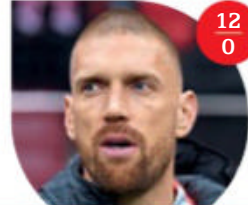
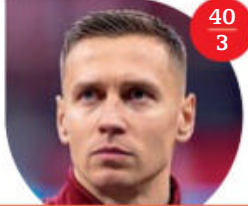
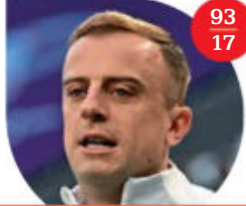
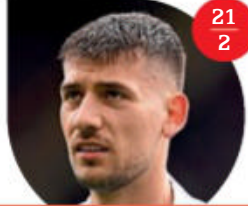
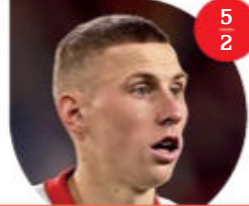
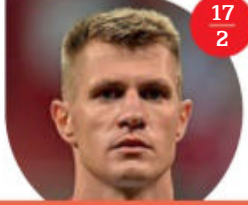
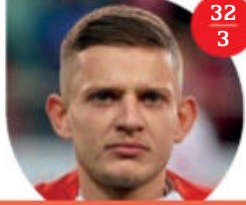
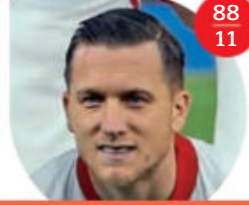
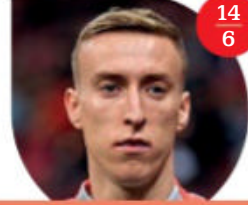
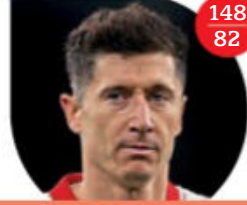
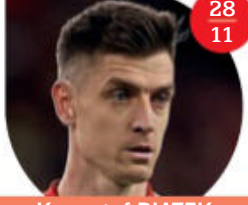
Age 51 (24.09.72)

Appointed September 2023

Formerly an uncompromising midfielder who played club football in Poland and Germany, Probierz's coaching career began in 2005 and he has since gone on to manage in 467 games in the Polish top flight. He won the Polish Cup and Polish Super Cup with Jagiellonia Bialystok in 2010, and repeated the trick ten years later winning the same two trophies at Cracovia. He's managed eight other Polish clubs and also had a short spell in Greece at Aris, before becoming the Poland Under-21 coach in 2022 ahead of his promotion to the seniors.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 10 Marcin BULKA Nice (Fra) Age 24 (04.10.99) Handed his Poland debut in a friendly v Latvia in November thanks to his outstanding performances in Ligue 1. On Chelsea's books as a youngster.	 90 Lukasz SKORUPSKI Bologna (Ita) Age 33 (05.05.91) Joined Roma from Gornik Zabrze in 2013, then on loan to Empoli before joining Bologna in 2018 where he has been No.1 for six years. Szczesny's long-term back-up.	 810 Wojciech SZCZESNY Juventus (Ita) Age 34 (18.04.90) Imposing figure who joined Arsenal at 16, then moved to Roma and finally to Juve. Poland's most-capped keeper, playing at the last three Euros and two World Cups.	DEFENDERS	 561 Jan BEDNAREK Southampton (Eng) Age 28 (12.04.96) Tall and strong centre-back who is a product of the Lech Poznan academy. Spent the last seven years at Southampton with a short loan at Aston Villa in 2022-23.	 540 Bartosz BERESZYNSKI Empoli (Ita) Age 31 (12.07.92) Versatile full-back, nominally a right-back but started all four games at Qatar 2022 at left-back. Joined Sampdoria in 2017, then loaned to Napoli and now Empoli.	 30 Pawel BOCHNIEWICZ Heerenveen (Ned) Age 28 (30.01.96) Tall centre-back who started the final group qualifier v Czech Republic. Now a regular in the Eredivisie after a less successful period in Italy with Reggina and Udinese.
	 151 Matty CASH Aston Villa (Eng) Age 26 (07.08.97) Speedy right-back, born in England but received Polish citizenship through his mother and won his first cap in 2021. Played every minute at the 2022 World Cup.	 100 Pawel DAWIDOWICZ Verona (Ita) Age 29 (20.05.95) Centre-back who left Lechia Gdansk for Benfica B in 2014, now showing his potential at Verona. Started in the play-offs more than two years after his last cap.	 211 Jakub KIWIOR Arsenal (Eng) Age 24 (15.02.00) Centre-back or left-back whose good form in Serie A for Spezia saw him debut for Poland in 2022 and join Arsenal a year later. Along with Szczesny he played every minute in qualifying.		 130 Tymoteusz PUCHACZ Kaiserslautern (Ger) Age 25 (23.01.99) Left Lech Poznan for Union Berlin in 2021, but has been loaned to Trabzonspor, Panathinaikos and Kaiserslautern. Quick and aggressive left-back or left-sided midfielder.	 120 Bartosz SALAMON Lech Poznan Age 33 (01.05.91) Tall centre-back or defensive midfielder who returned to Poland in 2021 after 14 years in Italy playing for the likes of Brescia, Foggia, Pescara, Cagliari, SPAL and Frosinone.	 30 Sebastian WALUKIEWICZ Empoli (Ita) Age 24 (05.04.00) The centre-back was out in the cold, winning all his caps in 2020, until Probiez recalled him. On Cagliari's books for three seasons and now impressing at Empoli.
	 403 Przemyslaw FRANKOWSKI Lens (Fra) Age 29 (12.04.95) Speedy wide midfielder who starred for Lechia Gdansk and Jagiellonia Bialystok before moving to Chicago Fire in 2019. Now really shining at resurgent Lens.	 9317 Kamil GROSICKI Pogon Szczecin Age 35 (08.06.88) Experienced and fast left-winger. Played his club football in Turkey, France and England before returning to his hometown club in 2021. Exclusively a substitute nowadays.	 212 Jakub MODER Brighton (Eng) Age 25 (07.04.99) Very talented midfielder who left Lech Poznan for England in 2020. On the road to recovery and searching for form after missing 18 months with a serious knee injury.		MIDFIELDERS	 52 Jakub PIOTROWSKI Ludogorets (Bul) Age 26 (04.10.97) Tall and strong midfielder who says that he studies Jude Bellingham's game. Probiez's biggest discovery. His career path has been unconventional, playing in Belgium, Germany and now Bulgaria.	 20 Taras ROMANCZUK Jagiellonia Bialystok Age 32 (14.11.91) Ukrainian-born defensive midfielder who has played in Poland since 2013. Made his Poland debut in 2018, but had to wait almost exactly six years to win his second cap.
 172 Damian SZYMANSKI AEK Athens (Gre) Age 28 (16.06.95) Experienced midfielder who spent a year in Russia with Akhmat Grozny before settling at AEK. Mainly a sub in qualifying and will have a similar role in Germany this summer.	 323 Sebastian SZYMANSKI Fenerbahce (Tur) Age 25 (10.05.99) Left-footed attacking midfielder or winger with good technique and excellent vision. Legia Warsaw graduate who left Dynamo Moscow for Fenerbahce last year via a brilliant loan at Feyenoord.	 160 Nicola ZALEWSKI Roma (Ita) Age 22 (23.01.02) Born in Italy to Polish parents, he debuted for Poland as a sub against San Marino in September 2021. Coolly scored his penalty in the shootout win over Wales. A key player.	 8811 Piotr ZIELINSKI Napoli (Ita) Age 30 (20.05.94) Skilful playmaker with great vision. Joined Udinese as a teenager and will leave Napoli, where he has played since 2016, this summer. A guaranteed starter in the midfield.	FORWARDS		 146 Adam BUKSA Antalyaspor (Tur) Age 27 (12.07.96) Tall striker and New England Revolution's second-most expensive signing ever. Struggled at Lens after a prolific spell in MLS, but now rebuilding on loan in Turkey.	 14882 Robert LEWANDOWSKI Barcelona (Spa) Age 35 (21.08.88) Goal machine who can finish in any situation. Joined Barca from Bayern Munich two years ago. Poland's all-time top scorer and record appearance maker.
 2811 Krzysztof PIATEK Istanbul Basaksehir (Tur) Age 28 (01.07.95) Clinical finisher. Joined Milan in 2018-19 after a great time in Genoa, but failed to make the grade there and at Hertha Berlin, Fiorentina and Salernitana. Now back in form in Turkey.	 3010 Karol SWIDERSKI Verona (Ita) Age 27 (23.01.97) Lewandowski's likeliest strike partner joined PAOK from Jagiellonia Bialystok in 2019 then moved to Charlotte FC in 2022. Loaned to Verona in February.						

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS
Bartlomiej DRAGOWSKI (Panathinaikos, Gre), Kamil GRABARA (Copenhagen, Den), Radoslaw MAJECKI (Monaco, Fra)

DEFENDERS
Michal HELIK (Huddersfield Town, Eng), Tomasz KEDZIORA (PAOK, Gre), Dominik MARCZUK (Jagiellonia Bialystok), Patryk PEDA (SPAL, Ita), Bartlomiej WDOWIK (Jagiellonia Bialystok), Mateusz WIETESKA (Cagliari, Ita)

MIDFIELDERS
Krystian BIELIK (Birmingham City, Eng), Mateusz BOGUSZ (Los Angeles FC, USA), Patryk DZICZEK (Piast Gliwice), Jakub KAMINSKI (Wolfsburg, Ger), Kacper KOZLOWSKI (Vitesse, Ned), Mateusz LEGOWSKI (Salernitana, Ita), Karol LINETTY (Torino, Ita), Filip MARCHWINSKI (Lech Poznan), Michal SKORAS (Club Brugge, Bel), Pawel WSZOLEK (Legia Warsaw)

FORWARDS
Adrian BENEDYCZAK (Parma, Ita), Arkadiusz MILIK (Juventus, Ita)

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FORWARDS

Adrian BENEDYCZAK (Parma, Ita), Arkadiusz MILIK (Juventus, Ita)



New-look Portugal

Under Roberto Martinez, Portugal are more attacking and flexible than under his predecessor Fernando Santos

The reaction to the appointment of Roberto Martinez as Portugal head coach in January 2023 was lukewarm at best, many concluding that the Spaniard was chosen as a stopgap until Jose Mourinho became available. If Martinez continues as he has started, the Special One may have a considerable wait on his hands.

It would have been impossible for Martinez to do any better in his first year in charge. For the first time, Portugal won every one of their qualification games for a major tournament, and did so in style. The *Selecao* scored more goals (36) and conceded fewer (two) than any other nation. Nevertheless, the outstanding campaign has to be put in the context of an easy group. Against the only team that put up a fight, Portugal edged to single-goal victories over Slovakia home and away.

That said, Martinez's men played some scintillating football along the way, and perhaps more importantly showed a level of tactical flexibility that marks out a clear difference to the long Fernando Santos era, when Portugal were often a defensive, dull and predictable team.

The new coach mixed it up from the very start, experimenting with



Eye-catching... Bruno Fernandes celebrates scoring against Sweden in March

weapons at his disposal, with the performances of Bruno Fernandes especially eye-catching. The Manchester United captain may not have had his best season in club football, but six goals and eight assists in the ten qualifiers and his exceptional all-round play has seen him become undoubtedly Portugal's main man.

"When you have exceptional technical quality, and you're a player with his personality and desire, it's a great example for our young players," gushed Martinez when asked about Bruno's contribution at the end of the campaign. "He can be the man starting the move, or he can be the one on the end of it. That's the reason he's a modern playmaker."

Several of Portugal's biggest current stars will

be at the peak of their powers at Euro 2024. Fernandes, Bernardo Silva, Ruben Dias, Joao Cancelo and Diogo Jota will all be in the 27-30 age range come the start of the tournament.

They are aware time is running out for them to write their name in golden letters in Portugal's football annals, as noted by Bernardo Silva: "We're contenders to win the Euros. We'll take it game by game, but we're going there with lots of ambition and we won't shirk our responsibility that with such a good generation of players like this, we have to fight for the trophy."

Tom Kundert

Martinez mixed it up from the very start, experimenting with different personnel and formations, and made it a priority to provide the platform for his attacking players to shine

different personnel and formations, the only constant being the inevitable presence of Cristiano Ronaldo. The captain appeared at risk of ending his extraordinary international career on a sour note after a Qatar World Cup to forget, but bounced back once again. His ten goals in qualifying were only surpassed by Belgium's Romelu Lukaku and Ronaldo's place in the starting line-up is assured.

Martinez has made it a priority to provide the platform for his attacking players to shine. Known as a front-foot manager, he squeezed the most out of the fantastic array of offensive



ROBERTO MARTINEZ



You must be extremely satisfied with your perfect qualifying campaign...

It's very difficult to win ten matches in a qualifying campaign. I did it with Belgium and I know you need a very focused team that gives it everything. In this Euro 2024 qualifying stage no other team managed ten victories. We didn't play against teams that had the same individual level of our players, but there are always difficulties and people in football know that. The fans and other people may have their own opinion, and that's healthy.



Inevitable presence
...Cristiano Ronaldo

Can Portugal win Euro 2024?

Yes, we can. To win a tournament you have to dream big. There are a group of nations who can win: Spain, England, France, Italy, Belgium and Germany because they are playing at home. Portugal have players at the best clubs in world football. A European Championship match entails details and luck. If you work hard, you have more luck.

Can you explain how Cristiano Ronaldo continues to deliver at his age?

For most players, when the body starts failing, the head accepts it. In Cristiano's case, it seems to be the opposite. It's incredible when a player is 39 years

old and he has the habits and the desire of an 18-year-old. It's an incredible capacity to repeat excellence.

You've shown lots of tactical flexibility. How important will that be in Germany?

The evolution is ongoing. We need tactical flexibility, but we can't do everything different all the time. The players, the opponent and the game state will define the strategy.

Does Portugal have the most star-studded squad at the Euros?

We know the talent we have. But talent alone doesn't win games

consistently. What does is your attitude, commitment and clarity of thought.

How important has Bruno Fernandes been for you under your stewardship?

Bruno has leadership. During the game his brain is extremely active and he is constantly assessing what's happening on the pitch. He has a very high ability to read the game, and can play in several positions at an extremely high level. He played a perfect qualifying campaign and he had a very important role.

Tom Kundert





TACTICS

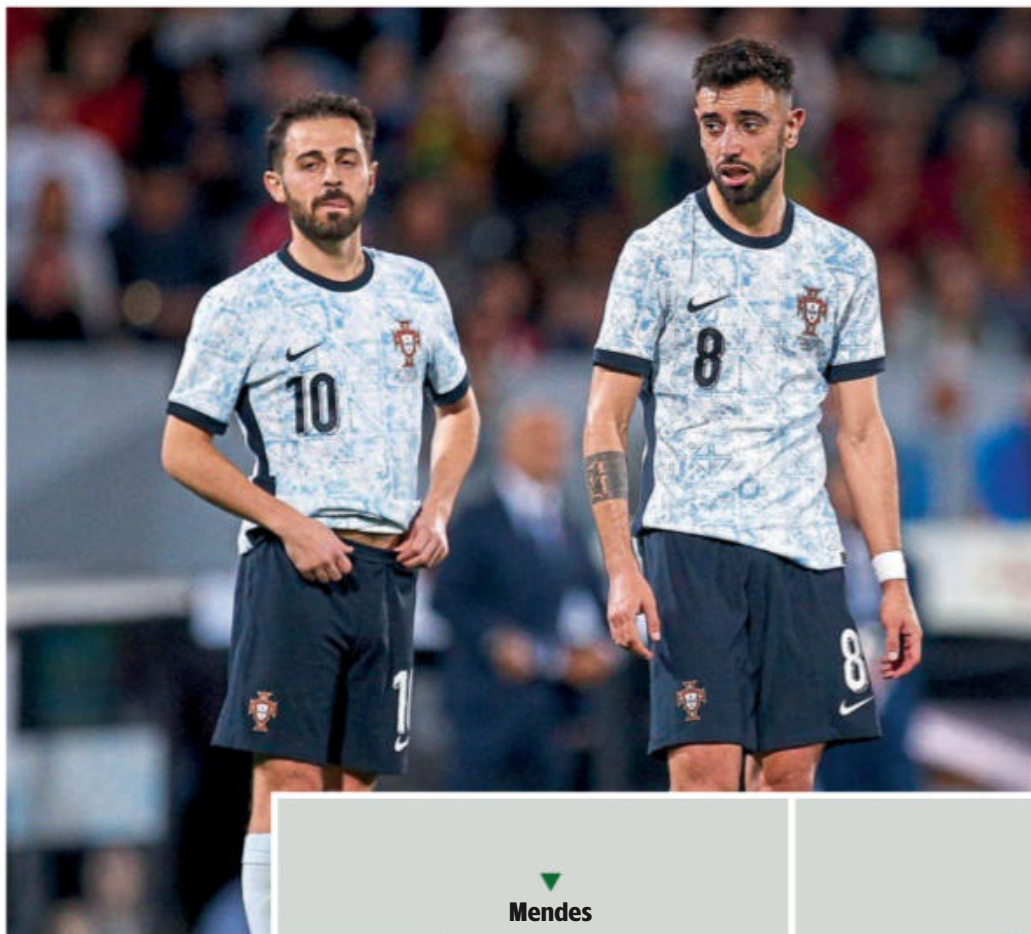
Flexible and unpredictable

“Portugal must always aim to win as a modern team with tactical flexibility.” That was the message from Roberto Martinez on the day he was presented as Portugal’s new coach. And he has been as good as his word.

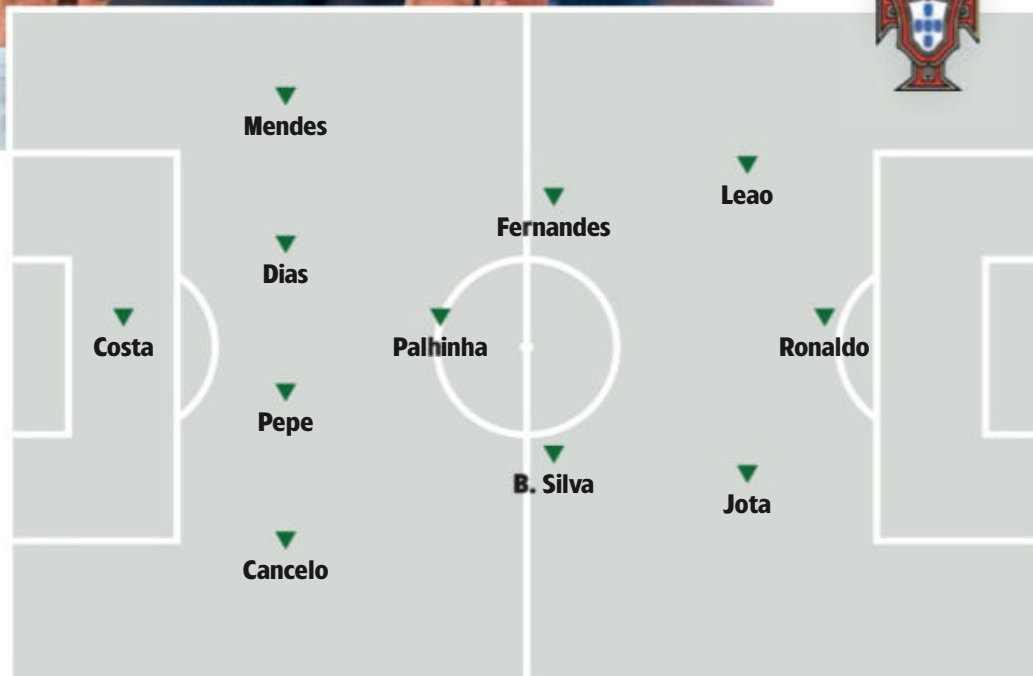
The former Belgium boss started out experimenting with a system he often used in his previous post consisting of a back three and wing-backs, but despite a winning start to qualification Portugal failed to click.

Martinez mutated to a conventional back four, although the holding midfielder (either Danilo or Joao Palhinha) would drop deep when the *Selecção* were in possession to make it a line of three at the back and give license to the full-backs to either rampage down the flanks or cut infield. This system worked majestically against Luxembourg at home, leading to a record 9-0 win.

Bruno Fernandes has been the chief playmaker, although his position is often interchangeable with Bernardo Silva to further confuse the opposition. Up front Rafael Leao has yet to nail down his place in the team, and Ronaldo is usually the lone striker, but the captain has also played effectively with a partner.



Interchanging...
Bernardo Silva and
Bruno Fernandes



Yet to fully nail
down a place...
Rafael Leao

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4 v **Finland**
(h, Lisbon)
Jun 8 v **Croatia**
(h, Lisbon)
Jun 11 v **Republic of Ireland**
(h, Aveiro)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 18
v **Czech Republic**
(Leipzig)
Jun 22 v **Turkey**
(Dortmund)
Jun 26
v **Georgia**
(Gelsenkirchen)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM PORTUGAL



“Portugal are strong contenders thanks to their individual quality and because Martinez has developed a collective idea, conciliating talents like Bernardo Silva and Bruno Fernandes. Ronaldo has revived, but it’s vital to understand if he enters the gameplan harmoniously or hinders the dynamics.”

Tomas da Cunha, TV and radio journalist



“Portugal start among the favourites. Roberto Martinez’s first tournament in charge could also be his crowning moment. For that to happen, Bernardo Silva and Bruno Fernandes must find a way to lead the charge allowing Cristiano Ronaldo’s swansong to end in glory.”

Miguel Lourenco Pereira, football historian



COACH

Roberto MARTINEZ (Spa)

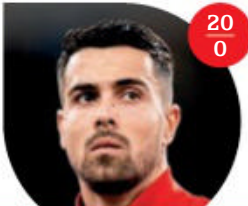
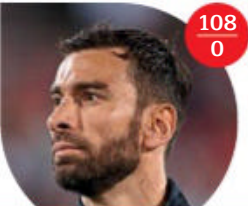
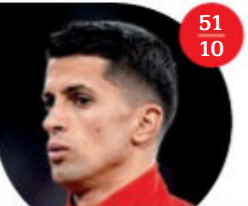
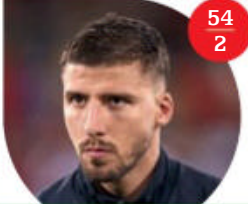
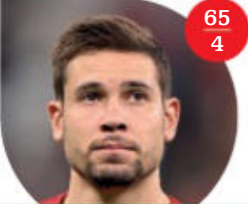
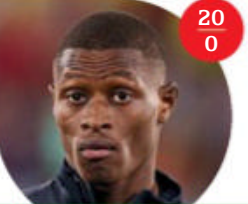
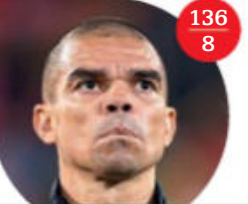
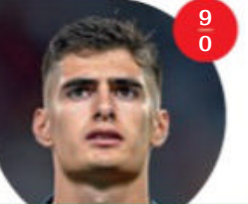
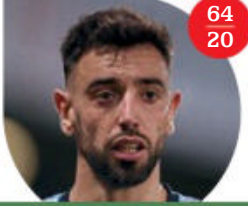
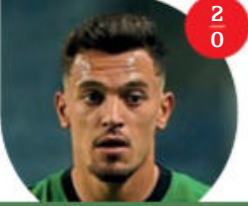
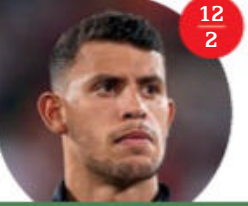
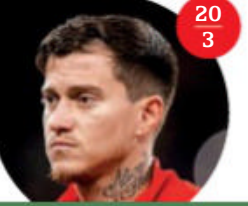
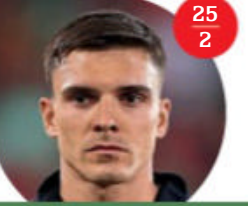
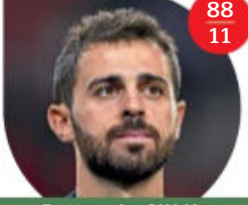
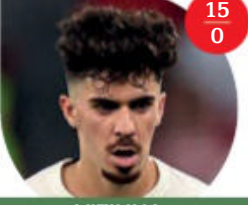
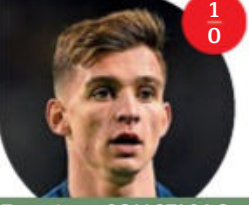
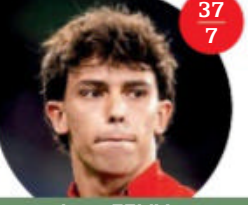
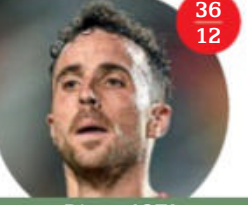
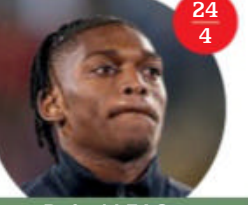
Age 50 (13.07.73)

Appointed January 2023

Martinez spent most of his club career in the UK, before taking the reins of a richly talented Belgium team. He was a surprise choice when hired by Portugal but quickly won over the doubters, aided by his excellent communication skills, but mainly thanks to performances on the pitch and implementing an easy-on-the-eye brand of attacking football. At Belgium, and to a certain extent with his club teams, Martinez’s sides were associated with flamboyance and panache rather than tangible success. He will be hoping to conjugate the two facets this summer.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Diogo COSTA Porto Age 24 (19.09.99) Calmness under pressure, a brilliant shot-stopper, razor-sharp reactions and excellent with his feet, the Porto No.1 is the archetypal modern-day keeper.	 Rui PATRICIO Roma (Ita) Age 36 (15.02.88) No goalkeeper has won more caps for Portugal than the Euro 2016 winner. Started the early Euro 2024 qualifiers and is a solid replacement for Diogo Costa if needs be.	 Jose SA Wolves (Eng) Age 31 (17.01.93) A highly consistent performer in the Premier League, Sa finally made his international debut in Euro 2024 qualifying, keeping a clean sheet against Liechtenstein.	 Joao CANCELO Barcelona (Spa) Age 30 (27.05.94) Brilliant attacking right-back also capable of playing on the left. His CV includes spells at Benfica, Inter, Juventus, Manchester City, Bayern Munich and Barcelona.	 Diogo DALOT Manchester United (Eng) Age 25 (18.03.99) Has come of age recently to become a key player at Old Trafford. Predominantly a right-back but, like Joao Cancelo, can play on either flank. Strong defensively and likes to burst forward.	 DANILO Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 32 (09.09.91) Can play as a defensive midfielder, but Martinez has preferred to use him as a centre-back – precisely as he has been utilised by his club for the majority of the season.
	 Ruben DIAS Manchester City (Eng) Age 27 (14.05.97) Has thrived at City but is yet to hit the same peaks of brilliance for Portugal. Played more minutes than any other defender during qualifying and is assured of his place in the XI.	 Raphael GUERREIRO Bayern Munich (Ger) Age 30 (22.12.93) Experienced left-back who provides Martinez with an excellent attacking option as a wing-back, but has had an injury-hit season. Another of the Euro 2016-winning brigade.	 Goncalo INACIO Sporting Age 22 (25.08.01) Classy ball-playing centre-back with an eye for goal, having netted almost 20 career goals at just 22 years old. Won the Portuguese league title with Sporting as a teenager.	 Nuno MENDES Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 21 (19.06.02) Outstanding left-back whose career has been blighted by injury. Returned from a ten-month lay-off in February, and his comeback could see Nelson Semedo and Joao Mario edged out.	 PEPE Porto Age 41 (26.02.83) The ex-Real Madrid man is still performing at the highest level despite being over 40. His vast experience could give him the edge over the younger centre-backs in the squad.	 Antonio SILVA Benfica Age 20 (30.10.03) Burst onto the scene as a teenager in Benfica's brilliant 2022-23 season and has not looked back since. Played five Euro qualifiers and vying with Pepe and Inacio to start.
	 Bruno FERNANDES Manchester United (Eng) Age 29 (08.09.94) The player who has most benefited from the appointment of Martinez. He has become Portugal's chief playmaker, capable of creating and scoring goals on a regular basis.	 Pedro GONCALVES Sporting Age 25 (28.06.98) Classy midfielder whose habitual absence from the national team has surprised many. Also known as "Pote", Arsenal fans may remember his halfway-line goal in the 2022-23 Europa League.	 Joao NEVES Benfica Age 19 (27.09.04) Precocious talent with a similar style to the long-time occupant of the central midfield position for Portugal, Joao Moutinho. Benfica's key player at just 19. Could be set for a big move soon.	 Matheus NUNES Manchester City (Eng) Age 25 (27.08.98) Driving ball-carrier who offers a level of physicality not found in Portugal's other midfield options. Hasn't played much since joining City, but impressed in the March thrashing of Sweden.	 OTAVIO Al Nassr (KSA) Age 29 (09.02.95) Feisty, aggressive but technically proficient midfielder, whose move to Saudi Arabia has not diminished his standing in Martinez's thinking. A valuable squad member.	 Joao PALHINHA Fulham (Eng) Age 28 (09.07.95) Provides a crucial physical presence in a team dominated by technically-gifted players rather than super athletes. Didn't let a collapsed transfer to Bayern Munich affect his club form.
	 Bernardo SILVA Manchester City (Eng) Age 29 (10.08.94) Like Ruben Dias, nobody doubts his commitment and desire in a Portugal shirt but he often struggles to replicate his dazzling club form at Manchester City for his country.	 VITINHA Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 24 (13.02.00) Class act who rarely puts a foot wrong. The diminutive midfielder has added goals to his game this season for his club, but was restricted to cameos in qualifying.	 Francisco CONCEICAO Porto Age 21 (14.12.02) Son of ex-Portugal international Sergio, now his club coach, the tricky winger could nab a squad place ahead of Pedro Neto, Bruma, Jota Silva and Trincao.	 Joao FELIX Barcelona (Spa) Age 24 (10.11.99) Somewhat weighed down by the huge fee from his 2019 transfer from Benfica to Atletico Madrid, Felix is capable of flashes of genius but remains inconsistent. Hit double figures for goals on loan at Barca.	 Diogo JOTA Liverpool (Eng) Age 27 (04.12.96) Vibrant, energetic and brilliant in the air, Jota has notably improved his finishing of late. Continues to be plagued by injury, though, which could open the door for Ramos or Felix to start.	 Rafael LEAO Milan (Ita) Age 24 (10.06.99) Extravagantly talented winger who offers a unique skillset and is a world-beater on his day. Won the Serie A MVP award and league title with Milan in 2021-22.
	 Goncalo RAMOS Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 22 (20.06.01) Lethal poacher who specialises in one-touch finishes. Rotation at club level may have disrupted his rhythm, but the PSG striker has a remarkable minutes-to-goals record.	 Cristiano RONALDO Al Nassr (KSA) Age 39 (05.02.85) Bounced back from a disappointing 2022 World Cup with renewed vigour, netting ten qualifying goals. More matches and more goals at the Euros finals than anyone in history.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Samuel SOARES (Benfica)

DEFENDERS

Diogo LEITE (Union Berlin, Ger), Joao MARIO (Porto), Nelson SEMEDO (Wolverhampton Wanderers, Eng), TOTI Gomes (Wolverhampton Wanderers, Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

Ruben NEVES (Al Hilal, KSA), Renato SANCHES (Roma, Ita)

FORWARDS

BRUMA (Braga), Ricardo HORTA (Braga), JOTA Silva (Vitoria Guimaraes), Dany MOTA (Monza, Ita), Pedro NETO (Wolverhampton Wanderers, Eng), Francisco TRINCAO (Sporting)

The normal ones

Nowhere near the same class as the golden generation of the 1990s, but this Romania side hopes to prove critics wrong

Romania are back at a major tournament after missing out on Euro 2020 and both the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. In fact, Romania's Euro 2024 campaign will be only their third appearance on football's main stage since the retirement of iconic leader Gheorghe Hagi in 2000. Led by Hagi, Romania's so-called "Golden Generation" of the 1990s – which also included the likes of Gheorghe Popescu, Miodrag Belodedici, Florin Raducioiu, Dorinel Munteanu, Dan Petrescu, Ilie Dumitrescu and Viorel Moldovan – impressed with their skill, grit and hunger for success, beating the likes of England, Argentina and Colombia in memorable World Cup clashes.

Today's team is far from that level of quality – although one of the main players is Hagi's son, Ianis, who hit the goal that sealed Romania's Euro 2024 qualification in a dramatic 2-1 win over Israel in neutral Hungary last November – but the group have proven solid and resilient even in the most difficult times.

They attracted heavy criticism from former players and the media for their playing style, but Romania still managed to top Group I ahead of Switzerland and Israel, finishing unbeaten with six wins and four draws. A solid performance and a 1-0 win in their final qualifier over Switzerland in front of a sold-out 55,000-seater stadium in Bucharest

They attracted heavy criticism for their playing style but still managed to top Group I, finishing unbeaten with six wins and four draws

was the bonus. Both teams were already through, but this was Romania's most consistent outing of the campaign. Their resilience often proved vital, suffering in away matches against Switzerland, Kosovo and Belarus. It wasn't easy at home to Israel either. All four of these clashes ended in draws.

Romania scored 16 goals in their ten qualifying games and more than half belonged to the trio of Nicolae Stanciu, Denis Alibec and Valentin Mihailescu with three goals each. Stanciu is Romania's key player and current captain. A former Chelsea trialist, he played for Slavia Prague and Anderlecht before



Key player...
Romania captain
Nicolae Stanciu

moving to Wuhan in China and then to Damac in Saudi Arabia. His form in 2024 hasn't been great, but national team coach Edward Iordanescu will rely on the 31-year-old to lead the midfield. At the back, Tottenham Hotspur's Radu Dragusin is regarded as a vital element, while up front Parma duo Mihaila and Dennis Man, Gaziantep's Denis Dragus and Alaves attacking midfielder Hagi will hope to turn on creative mode and provide Romania with the goals.

The lack of playing time at club level for many of his players, along with the lower-level leagues that the others compete in, are major concerns for Iordanescu. But just like in the qualifiers, he will hope to see these problems overcome by a group of "normal" players doing special things for their country.

Emanuel Rosu

EDWARD IORDANESCU



Was the match away to Switzerland the key result for you in qualifying?

I would rather say that winning away against Israel was the key result for qualification, as well as winning at home against Switzerland. We achieved something that not too many thought would be possible: to top the group without defeat. Switzerland is a top European team so to draw against them away, coming from 2-0 down, gave the players the mental confirmation of their true potential. But I was fully confident of their potential and I publicly stated so before the start of the campaign.

How important is Nicolae Stanciu?

He is one of our leaders and an extraordinary player with valuable experience who brings his huge talent, the willingness to fight and sacrifice everything for Romania. We do not have many 30-year-olds or others older than him. We managed to qualify for Euro 2024 with a young group of players, and the future must be even better if they work hard and develop around leaders like Stanciu.

What is your coaching philosophy?

I'm fully dedicated to building teams that play and react as one efficient and coordinated body. If you want much more than an ordinary group, every player must bring their specific



Like father like son...
Ianis Hagi celebrates
with his team-mates
after scoring v Israel

skills and use them to achieve the common goal. I believe that winning is a consequence of a very clear strategy, a sum of steps that are projected and bravely taken. Having an in-depth knowledge of the opposition, being sure that you can help your team-mate in any context and training like every exercise has the meaning of a trophy.

What do you think of Romania's group?

At this point, I am more focused on solving the problems that we have because I am fully confident that if we are in good shape and ready to play with the same spirit we had in the qualifiers, we can challenge any opposition at the finals. Unfortunately, we

have many key players who are not enjoying too much first-team football at their clubs, even though they are in La Liga, Serie A or the Premier League. At the same time, the huge number of foreign players in the Romanian league and the overall level of this league does not help because it provides us with few alternative high-quality or experienced players.

What are your goals at Euro 2024?

We will take it step by step. We will do everything we can to qualify from the group. At the same time, we know that Romanian football at club level is not great right now. We do not have clubs

**Top leader...
Iordanescu with
Nicolae Stanciu**



in the group stages of the continental competitions and we don't have many players in the top five leagues. So, we have the responsibility to help Romanian football through our results at Euro 2024. We are fully aware as well of the high expectations the Romanians have for the national team.

They missed celebrating the wins of Romania at major tournaments. There were too many years without us in the World Cup and European Championship, so we owe them a great experience and a national team to be proud of.

Samindra Kunti



TACTICS

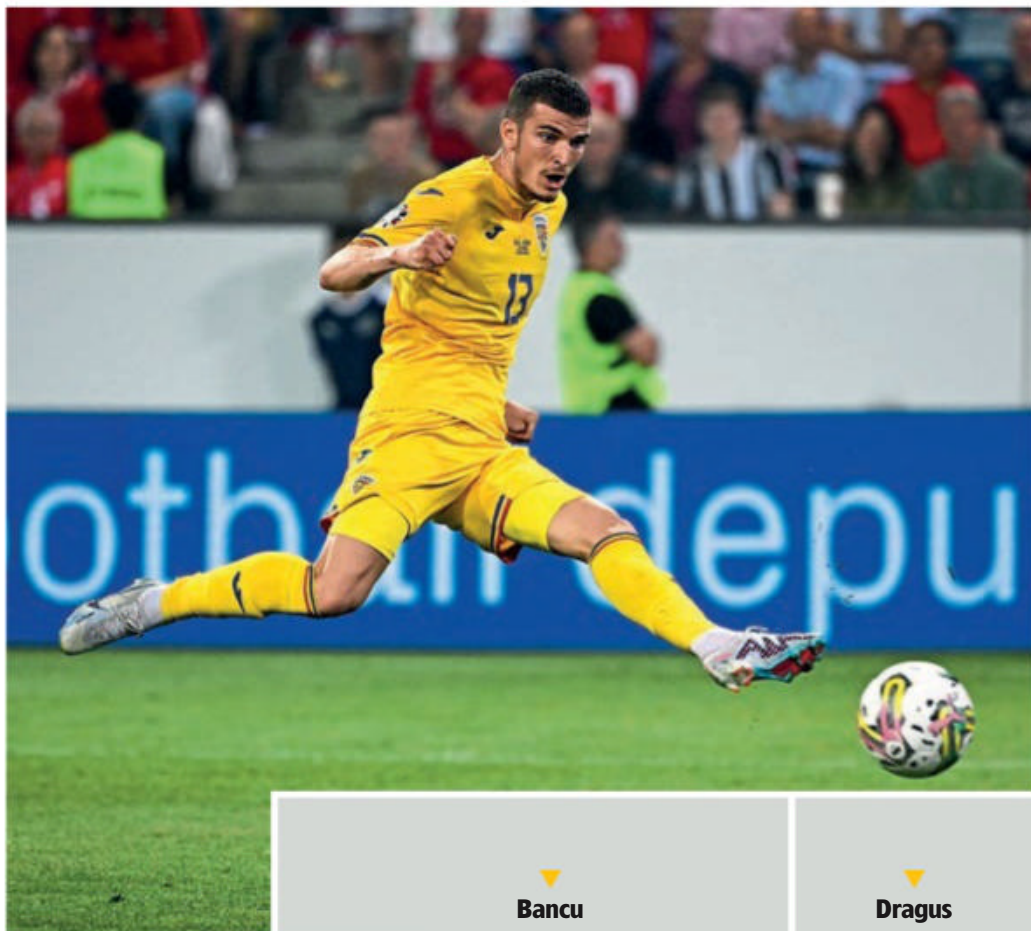
Cautious counter-attackers

Iordanescu's favourite system is 4-3-3 but he varied this in qualifying. Away to Switzerland he opted for three central defenders, and what resulted was an abandoned midfield, Switzerland taking unopposed control of the ball, and the concession of 67 per cent possession and 17 attempts on their own goal. Coming back from 2-0 down, with a smash-and-grab on the counter-attack twice late on, somewhat papered over the cracks.

Iordanescu knows his players well and often gets the best out of them, but the tactics he deploys sometimes has the effect of subordinating his team in front of the opposition more than it should. Even against Israel at home, Romania were dominated and lucky to get a point.

The last two qualifiers – wins over Israel and Switzerland – saw Romania at their best. Iordanescu added more creative players to his XI and the move worked. In the latter game, he played a 4-1-4-1 with a much closer design to the one he used regularly when he coached at club level.

Iordanescu generally tends to have a cautious approach, but Romania are very comfortable when out of possession and, with potent wingers Dennis Man, Denis Dragus and Valentin Mihailescu, are extremely dangerous on the counter.



Smash-and-grab...
Valentin Mihailescu scores against Switzerland



Counter threat
...Dennis Man

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Bulgaria**
(h, Bucharest)
Jun 8
v **Liechtenstein**
(h, Bucharest)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 17
v **Ukraine**
(Munich)
Jun 22
v **Belgium**
(Cologne)
Jun 26
v **Slovakia**
(Frankfurt)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM ROMANIA



"This qualification brought us more courage. There is potential in this team. We've been waiting for this qualification for so long and we needed this. This team's ambition should be to surpass everything that has been achieved before. Romanian football needs to perform on the highest stage once more."

Gheorghe Hagi, Romania's record scorer



"It would have been hard to see us qualifying the way things looked in some matches, but that turned around fantastically and we looked really good in the last two qualifiers. We should aim to reach the knockout stages."

Gheorghe Popescu, ex-Romania, Tottenham and Barcelona defender



COACH

Edward IORDANESCU

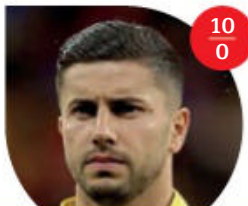
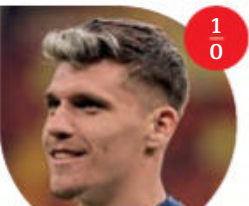
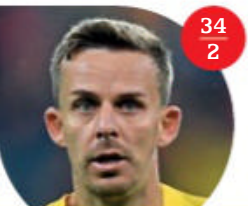
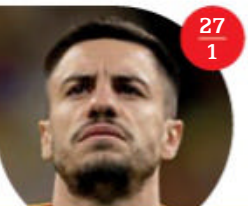
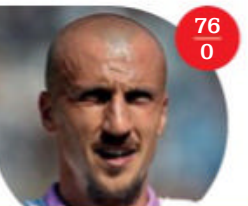
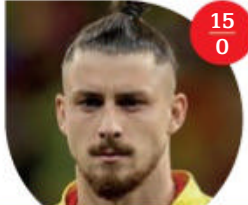
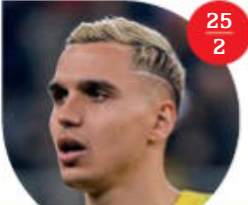
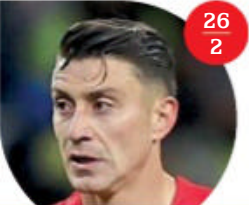
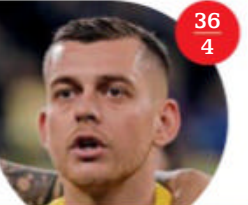
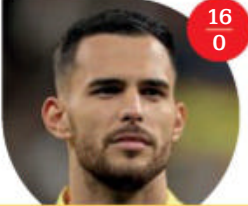
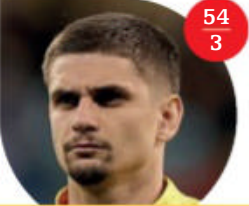
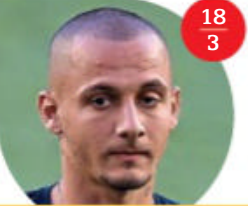
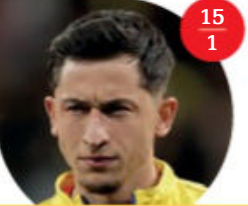
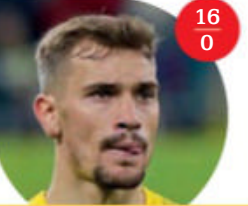
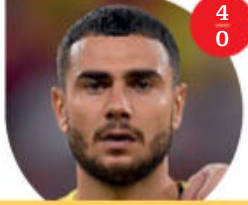
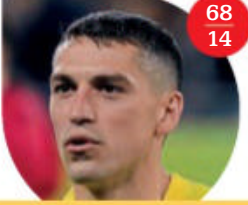
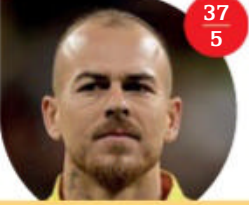
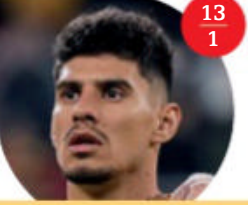
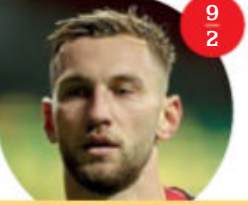
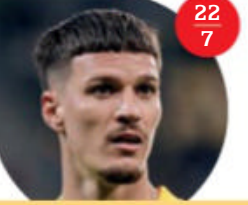
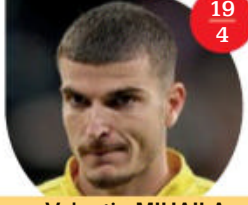
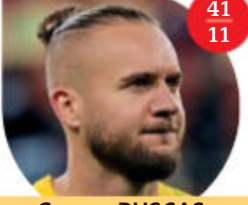
Age 45 (16.06.78)

Appointed January 2022

Hagi is not the only familiar name that helped guide Romania back to a major tournament after an eight-year hiatus. Edward Iordanescu is the son of legendary coach Anghel Iordanescu, the man who took Romania to the 1994 and 1998 World Cups, as well as Euro '96 and Euro 2016. Edward first made a name for himself by winning the Romanian title with CFR Cluj in 2020-21 after previously impressing at smaller clubs. Upon taking charge of the national team he oversaw a dismal Nations League campaign, but turned things around by leading his country to the Euros.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 10 0 Horatiu MOLDOVAN Atletico Madrid (Spa) Age 26 (20.01.98) Agile with great reflexes and won most of his caps in qualifying. Moved to Spain in January after three years at Rapid Bucharest, but life as Jan Oblak's back-up is hard.	 20 0 Florin NITA Gaziantep (Tur) Age 36 (03.07.87) Despite his club fighting against relegation in Turkey, Nita has been outstanding this campaign, receiving lots of praise and winning multiple man of the match awards.	 1 0 Stefan TARNOVANU FCSB Age 24 (09.05.00) Arguably the best keeper in the Romanian top flight. A good shot-stopper with a decent save-rate in one-on-one situations, but sometimes loses his concentration.	 34 2 Nicusor BANCU Universitatea Craiova Age 31 (18.09.92) Has defensive liabilities, but contributes lots offensively. There are not many natural left-backs available to Iordanescu, so Bancu is certain to play.	 27 1 Andrei BURCA Al Okhdood (KSA) Age 31 (15.04.93) Started all ten qualifiers, playing more minutes than anyone else. He is Dragusin's natural partner at the back and someone you can count on in a defensive battle.	 76 0 Vlad CHIRICHES FCSB Age 34 (14.11.89) If fit, should make the squad. The ex-Tottenham centre-back has battled injuries but he's the natural leader of this side, so the coach will try everything to get him to Germany.
	 15 0 Radu DRAGUSIN Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) Age 22 (03.02.02) Expected to become Romania's leader in the years to come. Strong but elegant, Dragusin is one of the team's key players. Still waiting to make his mark at Tottenham.	 25 2 Cristian MANEA CFR Cluj Age 26 (09.08.97) Mainly a right-back, but Iordanescu loves his versatility. Despite a tough season at club level, the fact that he can play anywhere in defence is a massive advantage.	 26 2 Ionut NEDELCEARU Palermo (Ita) Age 28 (25.04.96) The physical centre-back is now a regular in Serie B, which will help his cause. Started in a back three in qualifying and battling with Adrian Rus and Bogdan Racovitan for a squad spot.	 16 1 Andrei RATIU Rayo Vallecano (Spa) Age 25 (20.06.98) Hasn't featured much in La Liga this season, but the right-back always delivers when called upon to represent Romania. Tough to get past and has a great work ethic.	 16 0 Deian SORESCU Gaziantep (Tur) Age 26 (29.08.97) Sorescu is the ultimate utility man, capable of playing on both flanks either as a full-back or a winger. On loan in Turkey from Polish outfit Rakow Czestochowa.	 36 4 Alexandru CICALDAU Konyaspor (Tur) Age 26 (08.07.97) The midfielder hasn't found his place at club level, being loaned out twice by Galatasaray – first to Ittihad Kalba and now Konyaspor. Good on the ball and runs a lot.
	 33 5 Ianis HAGI Alaves (Spa) Age 25 (22.10.98) Has found starts hard to come by in La Liga in 2024, but keeps influencing matches for Romania. An important option for Iordanescu, either as a starter or off the bench.	 16 0 Marius MARIN Pisa (Ita) Age 25 (30.08.98) A player that always gives 100 per cent in every game in front of defence. Shows lots of heart and was often used as a sub in qualifying to help see out games.	 54 3 Razvan MARIN Empoli (Ita) Age 28 (23.05.96) Formerly of Ajax, Marin's game-time in Serie A has been limited and that has often been apparent on national team duty. Still, he is a natural starter in central midfield.	 18 3 Alexandru MITRITA Universitatea Craiova Age 29 (08.02.95) Craiova's fans and even their rivals call him "Messi", and his diminutive stature is not the only resemblance. Has great technical ability and creativity and is always a threat around the goal.	 15 1 Olimpiu MORUTAN Ankaragucu (Tur) Age 25 (25.04.99) The right-winger is highly skilful but inconsistent. Galatasaray loaned him to Pisa then sold him to Ankaragucu, but a strong Euros could pave the way for a big move.	 16 0 Darius OLARU FCSB Age 26 (03.03.98) One of the standout domestic performers and FCSB's captain, the attacking midfielder hasn't been involved much with the national team but should offer an extra option.
	 4 0 Vladimir SCRECIU Universitatea Craiova Age 24 (13.01.00) Romania play Screciu as a defensive midfielder, but at club level he is mainly used at centre-back. Iordanescu rates him highly and his versatility will be useful in Germany.	 68 14 Nicolae STANCIU Damac (KSA) Age 31 (07.05.93) The tactical brain of the team and one of the few players capable of shooting, dribbling and passing. Sense that he never quite reached his full potential.	 37 5 Denis ALIBEC Muaitheh (Qat) Age 33 (05.01.91) Once the biggest prospect in Romanian football, joining Inter as an 18-year-old, Alibec is now one of the national team's veterans. Currently playing his trade in Qatar.	 13 1 Florinel COMAN FCSB Age 26 (10.04.98) The "Romanian Mbappe" will hope to shine at the Euros after impressing for his club. Alongside Olaru, he is FCSB's best player. Will vie with Dragus and Mihaila for the left-wing berth.	 9 2 Denis DRAGUS Gaziantep (Tur) Age 24 (06.07.99) His loan from Standard Liege to Gaziantep has relaunched his career after less successful spells at Crotone and Genoa. The left-winger looks ready for bigger and brighter things.	 22 7 Dennis MAN Parma (Ita) Age 25 (26.08.98) The right-winger has been a standout star in Serie B during an excellent season for one of Italy's fallen giants. Now becoming one of Romania's main attacking threats too.
 19 4 Valentin MIHAILA Parma (Ita) Age 24 (02.02.00) The left-winger always looked dangerous off the bench in qualifying, making seven sub cameos and scoring a late double v Switzerland. Will hope to have a similar impact at the Euros.	 41 11 George PUSCAS Bari (Ita) Age 28 (08.04.96) The striker's goal drought looked like harming his chances of making Euro 2024, but Iordanescu continued to put his faith in him. Previously at Reading and Inter.					

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS
Marian AIOANI (Rapid Bucharest), Andrei RADU (Bournemouth, Eng)

DEFENDERS
Mario CAMORA (CFR Cluj), Andres DUMITRESCU (Sepsi), Virgil GHITA (Cracovia, Pol), Vasile MOGOS (CFR Cluj), Raul OPRUT (Hermannstadt), Alexandru PASCANU (Sporting Gijon, Spa), Bogdan RACOVITAN (Rakow Czestochowa, Pol), Adrian RUS (Pafos, Cyp)

MIDFIELDERS
Andrei ARTEAN (Apollon Limassol, Cyp), Tudor BALUTA (Farul Constanta), Marius STEFANESCU (Sepsi), Adrian SUT (FCSB), Florin TANASE (Al Okhdood, KSA)

FORWARDS
Daniel BIRLIGEA (CFR Cluj), Alex DOBRE (Famalicao, Por), Louis MUNTEANU (Farul Constanta)

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FORWARDS

Daniel BIRLIGEA (CFR Cluj), Alex DOBRE (Famalicao, Por), Louis MUNTEANU (Farul Constanta)



Scots on the march

The Tartan Army will flock to Germany to support their team this summer

It was symbolic that John McGinn and Scott McTominay were chosen for the video to unveil Scotland's new kit for the Euro 2024 finals. The duo have undergone quiet makeovers in the English Premier League over the past two seasons, with Scotland offering a further platform for the talented pair as they helped secure successive European Championship qualifications for manager Steve Clarke's impressive squad.

McTominay was the poster boy of Scotland's campaign with seven goals, which reignited the midfielder's value at Manchester United. Only strikers Romelu Lukaku, Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappe and Harry Kane scored more in qualifying than the midfielder, who has also added Champions League goals for United to his CV. In March, he was named Scotland's international Player of the Year and given the award by former United and Scotland star Darren Fletcher.

McTominay's two goals in the 2-0 triumph over Spain at Hampden Park, which followed a brace on the opening matchday against Cyprus, kick-started the momentum that took the Scots to five wins from their first five matches. The only qualifier they didn't score in was against Spain in Seville, where McTominay's stunning free-kick was controversially denied by VAR.

Momentum has stalled somewhat since qualification was secured. March's 1-0 friendly defeat at home to Northern Ireland extended Scotland's winless run to seven matches, although that includes friendlies against top-class opponents



Leaders...Steve Clarke with his captain Andy Robertson

lives in London, knows that greater respect for Scottish players in England is valid proof of the growth and evolution of his side. McGinn has been Aston Villa's talismanic captain for two years and Des Bremner, the former Scotland midfielder who won the European Cup with Villa in 1982, says: "The Villa fans took to John right away because of his tenacity. They love him, and this season he has taken his game to another level."

Scotland's captain, left-back Andy Robertson, has long been hugely influential for Liverpool, winning both the Champions League and Premier League during his time at the club, while Kieran Tierney could yet return to Arsenal after his loan at Real Sociedad. Midfield duo Ryan Christie and Billy Gilmour have had impressive seasons for Bournemouth and Brighton respectively, as has Celtic captain Callum McGregor, a mainstay in the midfield with McTominay and McGinn.

While Euro 2020 saw Scotland supporters restricted by COVID, this time 100,000 of the Tartan Army will be heading to Germany – recreating their visit to the country for the 1974 World Cup.

Phil Gordon

Scotland will take great confidence from how far they have come in Clarke's five years in charge

England, France and the Netherlands. Expectations have also been tempered by an injury crisis in the build-up – talented midfielder Lewis Ferguson suffered an ACL injury, right-back Nathan Patterson had hamstring surgery and experienced midfielder Stuart Armstrong also suffered a scare.

Nonetheless, Scotland will take great confidence from how far they've come in Clarke's five years in charge, qualifying directly for a tournament for the first time since France '98 and progressing into the top tier of UEFA's Nations League.

Clarke does not seek public endorsements for himself, but the former Chelsea right-back, who still

STEVE CLARKE



After qualifying for the Euros again you've drawn hosts Germany. Is it daunting?

No. Every game will be competitive. If you speak to the Tartan Army, all they want is for their team to be competitive every time they go out onto the pitch. I think we've got that now. Hopefully we'll play as well as we can and we'll see where that takes us. Last year was a great year, but it's time to close the door on 2023 and look forward to hopefully a very exciting and successful 2024.

Could the opening ceremony before the

game against Germany affect the players?

I'm pretty sure it will be a bit of a circus. It's something you have to be careful of. We have to separate ourselves from the build-up and just concentrate on being ready for the game.

At Euro 2020 you were based in Darlington, in England, but this time your camp will be in Scotland. Why?

We're going to base ourselves in Glasgow. We're not going abroad. I think at the last Euros it felt a little bit remote, we didn't get a feel for how the nation was. I want the players to feel the mood of the nation before they go so that they understand the magnitude of the tournament. Last time,



Poster boys...
Scott McTominay
and John McGinn

because it was COVID, because it was not a full Hampden, because we were based outside the country, they did not quite get the feel of how enthusiastic the nation were for it. We'll certainly know this time.

How hard will it be when you speak to the players who don't make the final squad?

Of course it will weigh on me when I have to make those decisions. But that's the job, that's what I am paid to do and that is what I will do. For Euro 2020, I had to leave out Andy Considine who had done really well.

Scotland hadn't been to a major finals for 23 years, so do you feel the players are

better for the experience of Euro 2020?

When we got a bit of stick after going out, I defended the way we played. The best performance was the 0-0 at Wembley where we controlled the game better and didn't allow it to become an open game. That suited our style. I also said coming out of those Euros that we would become a better team having spent so much time together, and I think that has been the case. What drives me and keeps me moving forward is that I see more improvement. I think we can improve again. And hopefully this summer we can show that.

**The Tartan Army...
Scotland's passionate
fans in full voice**



Is Germany a reward for the Tartan Army and their passionate support?

I don't think Germany know how many Scots will travel there. They might be surprised. The Scotland fans who have packed Hampden Park to capacity made it a place to be feared once again. They have played a key part in our success, both home and away, and they can now look forward to making their plans for Germany. I said after Euro 2020 that we wanted to be serial qualifiers again, and reaching successive Euro finals shows the progress we've made.

Phil Gordon



TACTICS

Goal-getting midfielders

Scotland produced a refreshing brand of attacking football in the qualifiers and were a joy to watch with 17 goals, despite not having a striker in the mould of an Erling Haaland.

Steve Clarke has also evolved. He could have stuck with the 3-4-1-2 from Euro 2020, which stifled eventual runners-up England at Wembley, but has switched to 5-4-1, which produced the vital 2-1 win in Oslo against Norway's Haaland and co.

It is, however, far from negative. The speed of Aaron Hickey (if fit) at right-back complements Andy Robertson on the left for raiding counter-attacks, while Kieran Tierney is nominally a centre-back with the pace to create and defend.

Spain and Norway both underestimated Clarke's side. While there is a dearth of prolific strikers, Lyndon Dykes and Che Adams both contribute other qualities – holding up or pressing respectively – and Dykes scores on big occasions.

The midfield is the chief source of goals: John McGinn is Scotland's current top scorer with 18 and Scott McTominay hit seven in qualifying, while Callum McGregor scored at Euro 2020 against Croatia.

A solid defence, usually patrolled by Scott Porteous and Jack Hendry, now has a new goalkeeper, with Angus Gunn of Norwich City as No.1.



Seven-goal star...
Scott McTominay



Industrious striker
...Che Adams

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 3
v Gibraltar
(n, Faro)
Jun 7
v Finland
(h, Glasgow)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 14
v Germany
(Munich)
Jun 19
v Switzerland
(Cologne)
Jun 23
v Hungary
(Stuttgart)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM SCOTLAND



"Scotland can make an impact at the finals. Manager Steve Clarke has a breed of stars who have grown on the international scene and who operate at high levels in club football. Progression from the group phase is well within the reach of a hungry and improving squad in the care of a shrewd coach."

Craig Swan, Scottish Daily Record



"Quality players such as John McGinn, Andy Robertson and Scott McTominay stand out as does the coach, Stevie Clarke. It is, however, the rampant team spirit of the group that has to be respected. They can progress with a fair wind."

Pat Nevin, ex-Scotland international and BBC Radio Five Live pundit



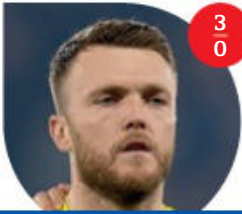
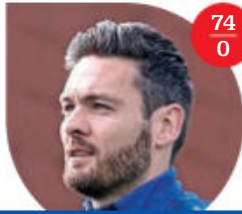
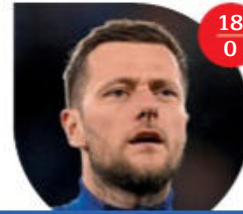
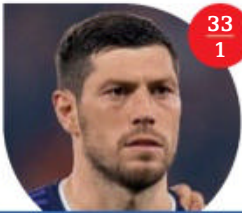
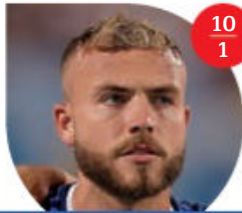
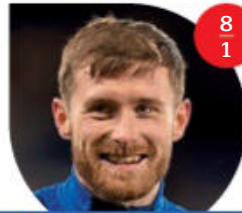
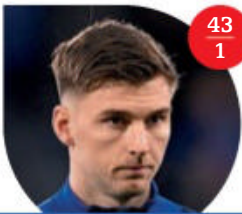
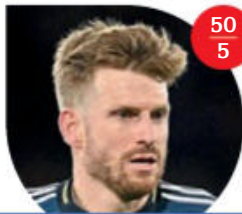
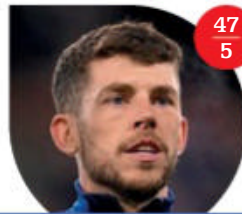
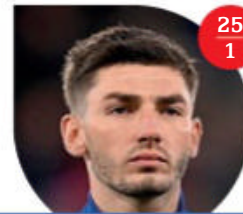
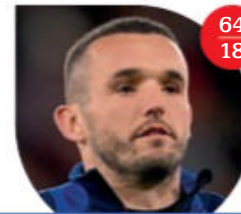
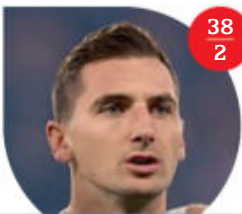
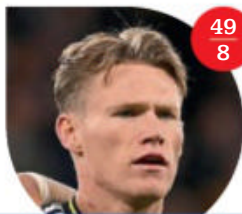
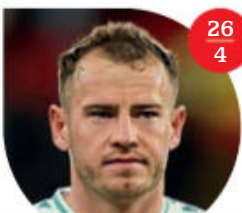
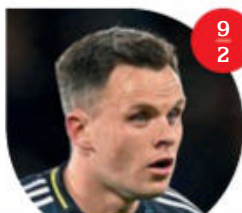
COACH

Steve CLARKE
Age 60 (29.08.63)
Appointed May 2019

Clarke has transformed the team since replacing Alex McLeish five years ago. The former Chelsea and Scotland right-back began on the coaching ladder as assistant to Jose Mourinho at Stamford Bridge and Kenny Dalglish at Liverpool, before becoming manager at West Bromwich Albion in 2012 and then Reading. But it was his work at Kilmarnock, between 2017 and 2019, turning a relegation-threatened side into European qualifiers that caught the eye of the SFA, and Clarke has replicated that impact on his country by reaching back-to-back Euros.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Zander CLARK Hearts Age 31 (26.06.92) Made his Scotland debut against France in 2023 and stood in for Gunn in the final two qualifiers. Won two domestic cups during an 11-year spell with St Johnstone.	 Craig GORDON Hearts Age 41 (31.12.82) Imposing veteran who won five league titles with Celtic and is now fighting to regain his fitness after suffering a double leg break v Dundee United in December 2022.	 Angus GUNN Norwich City (Eng) Age 28 (22.01.96) Made his debut at the start of the qualifiers following Gordon's injury and seized his chance. Represented England at youth level, but now following his dad, Bryan, as Scotland keeper.	 Liam COOPER Leeds United (Eng) Age 32 (30.08.91) Warms the bench for his club, but is a regular squad member for Scotland. Tall centre-back with good leadership skills. Likely vying with Grant Hanley for a squad spot.	 Jack HENDRY Al Ettifaq (KSA) Age 29 (07.05.95) Classy centre-back who has blossomed under Clarke after Celtic failed to show the same faith. His move to Club Brugge provided Champions League football, and now starring in Saudi Arabia.	 Aaron HICKEY Brentford (Eng) Age 21 (10.06.02) Played in the 2019 Scottish Cup final for Hearts at 16. Went to Italy as a teenager with Bologna before an £18m switch to Brentford. In a race to be fit for the Euros after an injury-hit season.
	 Scott McKENNA Copenhagen (Den) Age 27 (12.11.96) Made his Scotland debut in 2018 with Aberdeen, before a £3m transfer to Nottingham Forest. A committed, left-footed centre-back who has played Champions League football at Copenhagen.	 Ryan PORTEOUS Watford (Eng) Age 25 (25.03.99) The former Hibernian centre-back emerged under Clarke after an outstanding debut in 2022 v Ukraine. John McGinn says his old club-mate has a big international future.	 Anthony RALSTON Celtic Age 25 (16.11.98) Celtic right-back who won two domestic trebles and scored for Scotland in only his second game. A good crosser and solid defender who will deputise for Hickey given Nathan Patterson's injury.	 Andy ROBERTSON Liverpool (Eng) Age 30 (11.03.94) Talismanic captain and one of Europe's best left-backs. Started out at Queen's Park, then Dundee United and Hull City, before winning almost every honour club football has to offer at Liverpool.	 John SOUTTAR Rangers Age 27 (25.09.96) Centre-back first capped in 2018. Made his Dundee United debut at 16 and spent six years at Hearts before joining Rangers in 2022. His younger brother Harry represents Australia.	 Greg TAYLOR Celtic Age 26 (05.11.97) A huge part of Celtic's success with three league titles on his CV. The left-back was first capped by Clarke, who had Taylor under his wing during their time together at Kilmarnock.
	 Kieran TIERNEY Real Sociedad (Spa) Age 26 (05.06.97) Celtic teenage prodigy who won every domestic honour in Scotland before a £25m move to Arsenal in 2019. The left-back, who made his international debut at 18, is now on loan in Spain.	 Stuart ARMSTRONG Southampton (Eng) Age 32 (30.03.92) Emerging with Robertson at Dundee United and was part of Celtic's 2016-17 "Invincibles". A useful squad member, he'll hope to recover in time from a muscle injury.	 Ryan CHRISTIE Bournemouth (Eng) Age 29 (22.02.95) Broke through at Inverness, and proved a big success at Celtic where his goal threat saw him capped. Scored in the Euro 2020 play-offs, where Scotland eventually beat Serbia on penalties.	 Billy GILMOUR Brighton (Eng) Age 22 (11.06.01) Big talent, bought by Chelsea from Rangers in 2017 and fast-tracked by Clarke into the Scotland squad. Shone v England at Euro 2020 and has continued his progress at Brighton.	 John MCGINN Aston Villa (Eng) Age 29 (18.10.94) A genuine leader for both club and country, McGinn played more minutes than any other Scot in qualifying. First capped in 2016 while at Hibernian, he began his career at St Mirren.	 Callum MCGREGOR Celtic Age 30 (14.06.93) Peerless Celtic captain and a one-club man with eight Scottish Premiership titles under his belt. Unselfish work ethic and a composed passer. Scored Scotland's only goal at Euro 2020.
	 Kenny McLEAN Norwich City (Eng) Age 32 (08.01.92) His late winner in Norway was pivotal in qualifying, and he also scored winning penalties versus Israel and Serbia to get Scotland to Euro 2020. An ever-present for Norwich this season.	 Scott MCTOMINAY Manchester United (Eng) Age 27 (08.12.96) The tall midfielder's stellar form for Scotland has raised his club status, where he has also regularly scored crucial goals. Played at Euro 2020 as a defender. Lancaster born, Scottish father.	 David TURNBULL Cardiff City (Wal) Age 24 (10.07.99) Ticks a lot of boxes. Fit and scored seven goals for Celtic this season before moving to Cardiff in the winter. Was one of three uncapped players named in the Euro 2020 squad.	 Che ADAMS Southampton (Eng) Age 27 (13.07.96) Another Clarke "recruit", the Leicester-born striker joined Southampton from Birmingham for £15m in 2019. Has bags of pace, presses opponents and offers mobility.	 Lyndon DYKES Queens Park Rangers (Eng) Age 28 (07.10.95) The Australian-born targetman has repaid Clarke's faith with key goals since his Scotland debut in 2020. A great hold-up man who offers different attributes to Adams.	 James FORREST Celtic Age 32 (07.07.91) Hasn't played for his country since Euro 2020 but, unlike other attacking squad hopefuls Jacob Brown and Kevin Nisbet, Forrest has goals on his Scotland CV. May prove a useful impact sub.
	 Ryan FRASER Southampton (Eng) Age 30 (24.02.94) Diminutive winger last called up in 2022, but rejuvenated by his loan at Southampton. Versatile enough to play at wing-back and could benefit from the injuries to others. Euro 2020 squad member.	 Lawrence SHANKLAND Hearts Age 28 (10.08.95) Well-travelled striker who has found his mojo at Hearts with over 50 goals in two seasons. Scored a crucial stoppage-time equaliser in qualifying away to Georgia.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Liam KELLY (Motherwell)

DEFENDERS

Josh DOIG (Sassuolo, Ita), Grant HANLEY (Norwich City, Eng), Dominic HYAM (Blackburn Rovers, Eng), Max JOHNSTON (Sturm Graz, Aut), Ross McCORRIE (Bristol City, Eng), Stephen O'DONNELL (Motherwell), Nathan PATTERSON (Everton, Eng) – injured

MIDFIELDERS

Elliot ANDERSON (Newcastle United, Eng), Danny ARMSTRONG (Kilmarnock), Lewis FERGUSON (Bologna, Ita) – injured, Ryan JACK (Rangers)

FORWARDS

Jacob BROWN (Luton Town, Eng), Oli McBURNIE (Sheffield United, Eng), Kevin NISBET (Millwall, Eng)



Pessimism reigns

Confidence is low ahead of Serbia's first-ever Euros appearance as an independent nation

After a painful 24-year absence, Serbia have finally made it again to the European Championship. Officially, this will be Serbia's first Euro participation but, given that back at Euro 2000 the squad of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – as a matter of fact, Serbia and Montenegro – was made up of 90 per cent Serbian players, Serbia's appearance in Germany this summer should be considered a comeback rather than a debut.

However, instead of celebrating the successful qualification and looking forward to being part of this football festival, Serbian fans and media are rather pessimistic regarding the team's chances after a series of disappointing performances and results in qualifying.

Even national team coach Dragan Stojkovic, nicknamed "*Piksi*" in his homeland, admitted that he was not pleased with the performances in the qualifiers. Many fans were left wondering if Serbia would even have made it had they been drawn in a tougher qualifying group. This time, though, they consider themselves lucky having progressed from a relatively straightforward pool consisting of Hungary, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Lithuania.

Discounting the matches against an inferior Lithuania, Serbia only really impressed in two games – a 3-1 home

Best performance...Serbia celebrate during October's win against neighbours Montenegro



side is a lack of balance. Up front, they can be creative, dangerous and always likely to score, but at the same time they concede far too easily and a clean sheet is too often a rarity. The last World Cup says it all – they scored more goals than any team in their group but still finished bottom, netting five but conceding eight in their matches against Brazil, Cameroon and Switzerland. Whether Stojkovic and his players will be able to fix this problem remains to be seen.

This time, expectations of what Serbia can achieve is much lower. Realistically, the fans are expecting another group-stage exit but, as we all know, the magic of football has served up far bigger surprises than Serbia progressing to the last 16 this summer – and possibly beyond.

Perhaps Stojkovic can sprinkle some "*Piksi*" dust on Serbia's mission at the Euros?
Vladimir Novak

Serbian fans and media are rather pessimistic after a series of disappointing performances and results in qualifying

win over Montenegro and, to a certain extent, the 2-1 defeat away to Hungary. Such a decline seems strange given that this is the same coach and set of players who not so long ago played such eye-catching football and managed to qualify for the 2022 World Cup as group winners ahead of Portugal. A possible reason for the decline could be that the team has failed to recover from the psychological effects of suffering a group-stage exit in Qatar after heading to the Middle East in such optimistic mood and with relatively high hopes.

In terms of tactical aspects, it's clear that the biggest problem for the current



DRAGAN STOJKOVIC



Euro 2000 was your fourth and final tournament as a player. Perhaps it is destiny then that it was you who guided Serbia back to the European Championship 24 years later... Maybe it's destiny, who knows? Back then I was captain and leader of our team. And now, after more than two decades, I have the task and privilege as coach to lead the national team of Serbia at the European Championship. Apparently they had to wait such a long time for me to take them to the Euro finals again!

How do you assess the performances and results of your team in qualifying?

To be honest, I wasn't happy with the performances but I'm pleased with the result. If before the campaign we were offered to qualify in the way we did, I would have accepted it immediately. Our priority was to qualify and we achieved that. It is about time that Serbia played again at the Euros after 24 years. Performance-wise, sometimes you have that paradox: you play a game that delights everybody, but still you don't get the result. There are games like in Budapest [Serbia lost 2-1 to Hungary] when nobody could convince me that we weren't the better team, but we still lost.



Serbia's all-time
top goalscorer...
Aleksandar Mitrovic

Before the World Cup in Qatar, fans and media in Serbia had high expectations and you too were very optimistic. This time it seems quite different – could this actually suit you and your team?

After the victory against Portugal [a 2-1 win in Lisbon in the final 2022 World Cup qualifier], euphoria was created in the build-up to the World Cup. However I was extremely worried when I realised that some of our main players weren't fully fit. I knew that, in such a situation, we would struggle. I'm sure that we would have achieved something if everything had been alright. As for the atmosphere before the Euros,

the media will determine that. I only ask for support for the players.

How do you assess your team's chances of advancing to the knockout rounds?

Our group is difficult, but at the Euros there are no easy groups and no easy opponents. We all know that. England have a very strong team and they are the favourites in our group. I think they are also among the top favourites to win the title. I would have preferred to play against them in the third game, rather than the first. This match will be a challenge for us, but

Familiar foes...Serbia took on Slovenia in the 2022-23 UEFA Nations League



football is a game, 11 v 11, and no matter if they are favourites, it's up to us not to give up and to believe in our quality. Our second game is against Slovenia. We know each other well from our encounters in the Nations League.

This game, alongside the match against Denmark, will decide who goes through to the round of 16. As for Denmark, we lost against them 3-0 in a friendly [in 2022], but this will be different. I believe that we have the strength and quality to face that challenge.

Vladimir Novak



TACTICS

Back three or back four?

In terms of style of play and tactics, Stojkovic favours attacking football. The exception is when Serbia are forced to defend; like, for example, in Qatar against Brazil. Something similar could happen versus England this summer.

In qualifying, the most-used formation was 3-4-2-1 with Dusan Tadic and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic operating behind striker Aleksandar Mitrovic. Twice they played a 3-4-1-2 with Mitrovic partnered by Dusan Vlahovic in attack. Only once, away to Hungary, did Stojkovic deploy a 4-3-3 – although in the second half, with Serbia trailing 2-1, they reverted to a back three.

In the first March friendly, a 4-0 defeat to Russia in Moscow, Serbia started with a back four. However, the result wasn't a true reflection of the formation in action because right-back Milan Gajic was sent off after just 20 minutes, leaving them a man down and with centre-back Strahinja Erakovic having to fill in on the right.

In the second March friendly, a 1-0 win away to Cyprus, Stojkovic returned to a back three. However, against a team ranked 125th in the world and who failed to register a single point in their Euro 2024 qualifying campaign, it is hard to consider it an indicator of how Serbia might set up against sterner opposition.



Captain and playmaker...Dusan Tadic played every Euro qualifier



Sparingly used... Juventus striker Dusan Vlahovic

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Austria**
(a, Vienna)
Jun 8
v **Sweden**
(a, Stockholm)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 16
v **England**
(Gelsenkirchen)
Jun 20
v **Slovenia**
(Munich)
Jun 25
v **Denmark**
(Munich)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM SERBIA



"It's surely a success that Serbia qualified, but the performances were not shining. Unlike before Qatar, this time there is no euphoria. I think that's good. Our group is difficult, but that was expected as we were drawn from the fourth pot. If we reach the knockout phase, everything is possible."

Zarko Lazetic, TSC Backa Topola coach



"This team needs to prove themselves to themselves. Despite an unimpressive past 18 months, they possess talent and experience and have been a compact group for the past three years. If drops during games can be avoided, they can reach the knockout stage."

Aleksandar Stojanovic, RTS journalist

COACH

Dragan STOJKOVIC

Age 59 (03.03.65)

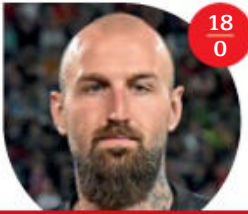
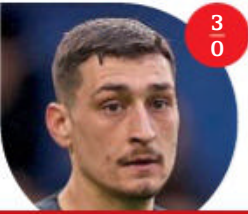
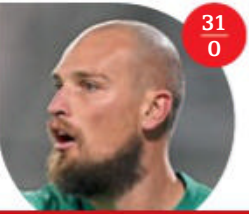
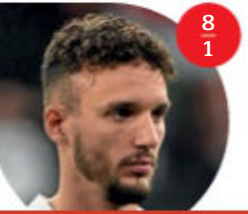
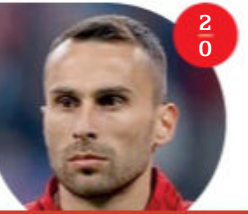
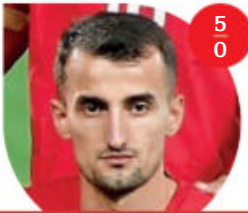
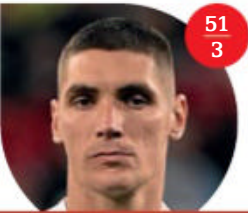
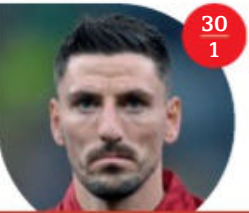
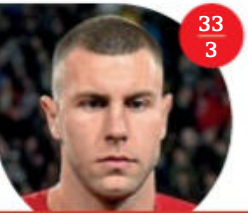
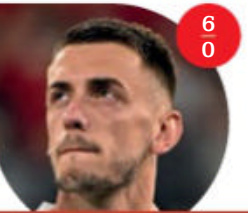
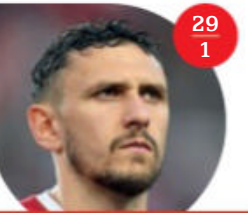
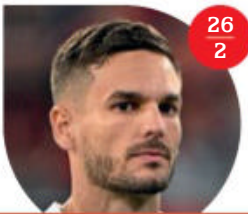
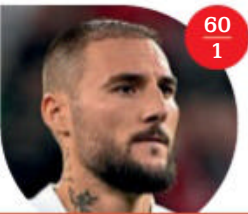
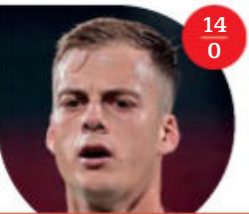
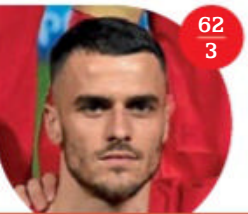
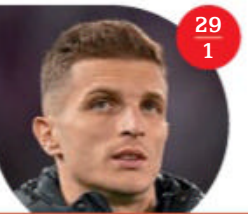
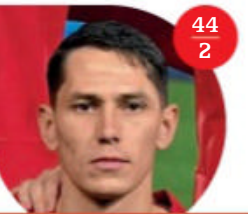
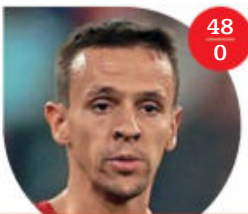
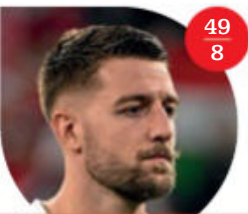
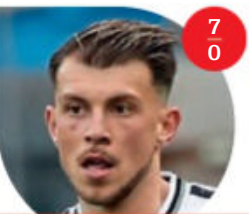
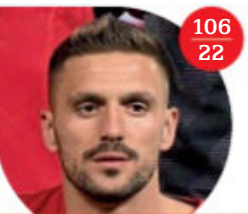
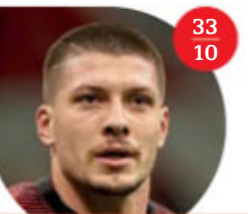
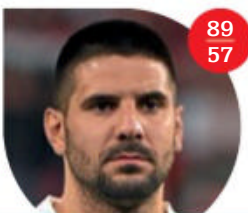
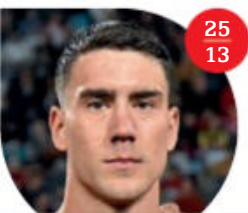
Appointed March 2021



The former world-class playmaker started his coaching career at the age of 43 and, before the Serbia job, worked successfully in Japan and China. By qualifying for the 2022 World Cup and Euro 2024, plus winning promotion to the top division in the UEFA Nations League, Stojkovic has become by far the most successful national team coach since Serbia started playing as an independent nation in 2006. However, after the failure in Qatar and the subsequent poor performances in the Euro qualifiers, his stock with Serbian fans and media has fallen.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Vanja MILINKOVIC-SAVIC Torino (Ita) Age 27 (20.02.97) Undisputed No.1, comfortable with the ball at his feet and one of the few Serbians who performed well in Qatar. Signed by Manchester United as a 17-year-old.	 Djordje PETROVIC Chelsea (Eng) Age 24 (08.10.99) In less than two years he has risen from Cukaricki in Belgrade, via MLS club New England Revolution, to Stamford Bridge. Many would also like to see him start for Serbia.	 Predrag RAJKOVIC Mallorca (Spa) Age 28 (31.10.95) Although he is a regular in La Liga, in the qualifiers he was only a substitute. One can expect that he will be given the same brief at the Euros. A back-up at the last two World Cups.	 Srdjan BABIC Spartak Moscow (Rus) Age 28 (22.04.96) Left-footed centre-back who spared Serbia's blushes in qualifying with a late equaliser v Bulgaria. Deputy to the similarly tall Pavlovic on the left side of a back three.	 Strahinja ERAKOVIC Zenit (Rus) Age 23 (22.01.01) Talented centre-back who can also fill in at right-back if needed. Was an unused substitute in Serbia's World Cup squad at Qatar 2022 and might play a similar role in Germany.	 Milan GAJIC CSKA Moscow (Rus) Age 28 (28.01.96) Played in Stojkovic's first match as coach – a World Cup qualifier in March 2021. Now back after a three-year hiatus, and could be first pick at right-back if Serbia opt to play with a back four.
	 Erhan MASOVIC Bochum (Ger) Age 25 (22.11.98) Centre-back who can also play as a holding midfielder. A regular starter for his club, but for the national team he is back-up for first-choice defensive trio Milenkovic, Veljkovic and Pavlovic.	 Nikola MILENKOVIC Fiorentina (Ita) Age 26 (12.10.97) A stalwart right-sided centre-back, both for his club and Serbia. Played the most minutes of any Serbia defender in qualifying. Euro 2024 will be his third major tournament.	 Filip MLADENOVIC Panathinaikos (Gre) Age 32 (15.08.91) Experienced left-back who has enjoyed a decent first season in Greece after many years in Poland. Got three assists in qualifying and is an excellent deputy for Kostic in a 3-4-2-1.	 Strahinja PAVLOVIC Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) Age 23 (24.05.01) The young centre-back is a role model when it comes to attitude, fitness and fighting spirit, but he shares the same weakness as all the defenders – insecure when playing the ball out from defence.	 Aleksa TERZIC Red Bull Salzburg (Aut) Age 24 (17.08.99) Left-back who left Fiorentina for regular playing time at Red Bull Salzburg. Will vie with Mladenovic for the left-back berth if Stojkovic opts for a back four, and may even be favourite.	 Milos VELJKOVIC Werder Bremen (Ger) Age 28 (26.09.95) Swiss-born centre-back and first choice at the heart of the defence, who in his youth was at Tottenham. Like many of the squad, a member of the U20 World Cup-winning team of 2015.
	 Mijat GACINOVIC AEK Athens (Gre) Age 29 (08.02.95) Versatile attacking midfielder who is back on the scene after a few years in the wilderness. Usually plays as a left-winger for the national team.	 Nemanja GUDELJ Sevilla (Spa) Age 32 (16.11.91) Anchorman who plays in defence for his club. That versatility was highlighted in qualifying where he was the only Serbian outfielder to start every match – four at centre-back and four in midfield.	 Ivan ILIC Torino (Ita) Age 23 (17.03.01) Highly talented central midfielder who is doing well at Torino, but still waiting to break into Serbia's first XI. Should recover from a knee injury in time for the Euros.	 Filip KOSTIC Juventus (Ita) Age 31 (01.11.92) Left-winger or wing-back who this season has put in some uncharacteristically pale performances with Juve; and it was a similar story in the qualifiers. Still, a key player for Serbia.	 Darko LAZOVIC Verona (Ita) Age 33 (15.09.90) Right-winger who actually plays on the left for his club. Away to Bulgaria – his only appearance in qualifying – he came off the bench and scored a wondergoal stoppage-time equaliser.	 Sasa LUKIC Fulham (Eng) Age 27 (13.08.96) Central midfielder who this spring has shown some good form in the Premier League. In the qualifiers – where he started five times – his performances were less impressive.
MIDFIELDERS	 Nemanja MAKSIMOVIC Getafe (Spa) Age 29 (26.01.95) Defensive midfielder with a huge work-rate who can help close out games. Likely vying with Mijailovic and Zdjelar for a squad place. Match-winner of the 2015 Under-20 World Cup final.	 Sergej MILINKOVIC-SAVIC Al Hilal (KSA) Age 29 (27.02.95) Skilful and versatile midfielder who, after eight seasons with Lazio, made a lucrative move to Saudi Arabia last summer where he has produced some strong performances.	 Lazar SAMARDZIC Udinese (Ita) Age 22 (24.02.02) Berlin-born attacking midfielder who switched international allegiance last year after previously playing for Germany's U21s. Hugely talented but for now back-up to Tadic and Milinkovic-Savic.	 Dusan TADIC Fenerbahce (Tur) Age 35 (20.11.88) Classy playmaker and still Serbia's main man. Left Ajax last summer for Turkish title contenders Fenerbahce. In March he overtook Branislav Ivanovic as his country's most-capped player.	 Andrija ZIVKOVIC PAOK (Gre) Age 27 (11.07.96) Quick right-winger or right wing-back – despite being left-footed – who is a key player for his club. From a defensive point of view, his tactical shortcomings can sometimes be exposed.	 Luka JOVIC Milan (Ita) Age 26 (23.12.97) After three frustrating years at Real Madrid, he is now trying to revive his career at Milan where he has shown glimpses of his goal prowess. Very good back-up striker.
	 Aleksandar MITROVIC Al Hilal (KSA) Age 29 (16.09.94) With five goals, he was once again Serbia's top scorer in qualifying. His international scoring record is astounding, and it has been a similar story at club level previously for Fulham and now Al Hilal.	 Dusan VLAHOVIC Juventus (Ita) Age 24 (28.01.00) Strong and skilful centre-forward who was prolific at Fiorentina before signing for Juventus. A thigh injury restricted his contribution at Qatar 2022 to only 79 minutes and one goal.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Veljko ILIC (TSC Backa Topola), Boris RADUNOVIC (Cagliari, Ita), Filip STANKOVIC (Sampdoria, Ita) DEFENDERS Matija NASTASIC (Mallorca, Spa), Kosta NEDELJKOVIC (Red Star Belgrade), Mihailo RISTIC (Celta Vigo, Spa), Jan-Carlo SIMIC (Milan, Ita) MIDFIELDERS Filip DJURICIC (Panathinaikos, Gre), Marko GRUJIC (Porto, Por), Srdjan MIJAILOVIC (Red Star Belgrade), Stefan MITROVIC (Verona, Ita), Uros RACIC (Sassuolo, Ita), Nemanja RADONJIC (Mallorca, Spa), Sasa ZDJELAR (CSKA Moscow, Rus) FORWARDS Samed BAZDAR (Partizan Belgrade), Djordje JOVANOVIC (Basel, Sui), Dejan JOVELJIC (LA Galaxy, USA), Petar RATKOV (Red Bull Salzburg, Aut)			
					FORWARDS	



The Italian job

Slovakia will be hoping that their Italian coach Francesco Calzona can take them to even greater heights this summer

In a bizarre job-share arrangement, Slovakia's Italian coach Francesco Calzona currently divides his time between Bratislava and Naples. The situation came about in February, when the former coffee trader agreed to oversee 2022-23 Italian champions Napoli for the rest of the Serie A season, while also preparing the Slovakia national team for Euro 2024.

Considering the national job is Calzona's first as head coach, the results have been impressive so far. Slovakia only lost twice in ten games in 2023, both by the odd goal to Euro qualifying group favourites Portugal. The other eight matches involved modest opposition, but you can only beat what's in front of you, as they say.

For both parties, the relationship has been a steep learning curve. Slovakia's first foreign coach (discounting the Czech Pavel Hapal), Calzona arrived after poor showings at Euro 2020 and qualifying for the subsequent World Cup in Qatar. Placed in pot 5 for Euro 2024 qualifying alongside the likes of Gibraltar and Malta, Slovakia were perhaps fortunate to be drawn alongside two nations in decline – Bosnia & Herzegovina and Iceland – and the quickly-improving Luxembourg, whom they beat 1-0 away to secure the runners-up spot.

Unfamiliar to most in Slovakia, Calzona became familiar with the

Napoli boss...
Calzona on the
touchline for the
Serie A club



Skriniar and the midfield trio of Ondrej Duda, Stanislav Lobotka and Juraj Kucka all familiar with the ways of Serie A, linguistic and cultural differences have not been an issue on the training pitch.

Another veteran, goalkeeper Martin Dubravka, has re-established himself at Newcastle United since Nick Pope's injury, and has put his comedic own goal at Euro 2020 behind him. Up front, Lukas Haraslin is in top form for club, Sparta Prague, and country. The same can be said of fellow striker Robert Bozenik, still only 24, at Boavista.

Until late March, Calzona could only focus on two of his opponents in Group E, Belgium and Romania, with the third team, Ukraine, only confirmed after the play-offs. Though expectations are modest, another fairly kind draw has meant this solid, experienced Slovakia side may just make it through.

Peterjon Cresswell

Considering the national job is Calzona's first as head coach, the results have been impressive

country while working with Slovak superstar Marek Hamsik as Napoli's assistant manager in the player's later seasons. The pair clicked and the job was proposed. Both were in tears as Hamsik bowed out at his farewell game for Slovakia in November 2022. The veteran then put in two more shifts for his country in June 2023, against Iceland and Liechtenstein, before retiring for the final time.

Hamsik's involvement changed the dial on the public perception of Calzona, who speaks no English and whose press conferences were initially poorly translated. With stalwarts Milan

FRANCESCO CALZONA



Slovakia were in pot 5 for qualifying and this was your first job anywhere as head coach, so how did you feel after sealing Euro 2024 qualification against Iceland?

For 15 years I worked with some big names. I was an assistant because that was what fulfilled me. I learned a lot. Then this offer came and I accepted it immediately, and with pleasure. And current emotions? My nature is to give rather than take, so seeing happy players and a sold-out stadium means more than any personal joy. It's the boys who deserve to be celebrated.

How encouraging was it to show that you could compete with Portugal in qualifying?

Let's stay calm. It is very difficult for us to compete with such top teams, but we have shown that we don't just have to suffer against them, that our goal is to always be proactive and earn the respect of opponents of this level. It will take a few more years before we can comprehensively compete with the big rivals.

How did you change the team's mentality?

I told the players that I don't like passive football and I would like my team to win every game. If it happens that the opponent is better, then we congratulate them. However, just defending in a deep block should not be



Slovakia stalwart...
Paris Saint-Germain
defender Martin Škriniar

our choice. The opponent has to force us to do that with their quality.

Does having experienced players help?

This team has proven that it is growing. Slovak fans should be proud of all these boys. The likes of [Peter] Pekarík are role models for young people. And the same for [Juraj] Kucka. As long as I'm here and he wants to play, Kucka will simply be here.

How do you reflect on your tenure so far?

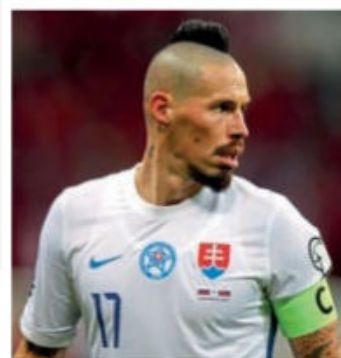
What pleased me the most was that I met many loyal people who will remain in my life forever. I was extremely happy when all the children invaded the pitch after our match

with Iceland to celebrate our success with us.

How does your coaching role at Napoli alter your work for Slovakia?

The fact that we went to Naples did not change anything. We still work for Slovak football and the association. Two Italians from the staff remain in Slovakia and are devoting themselves 100 per cent only to this. Of course, I have work in Naples during the day, but when the training is over we have a few hours in the evening to deal with the Slovak national team directly from Naples. Once again, I would like to thank the union for allowing me to do this and proving that they value

**Calzona's contact
...former Slovakia
captain Marek Hamsík**



me. I will never forget that people in Slovakia were the first to believe in me at the beginning. They supported me and stood by me during the difficult moments we went through. They always treated me with respect and dignity. That's also why I took the national team into account in the first place. Working between two places is certainly demanding, but I don't feel tired at this moment because I am extremely motivated and I've got lots of things to deal with. Every time I come back to Slovakia, I am recharged with energy.

*Peterjon Cresswell
& Samindra Kunti*



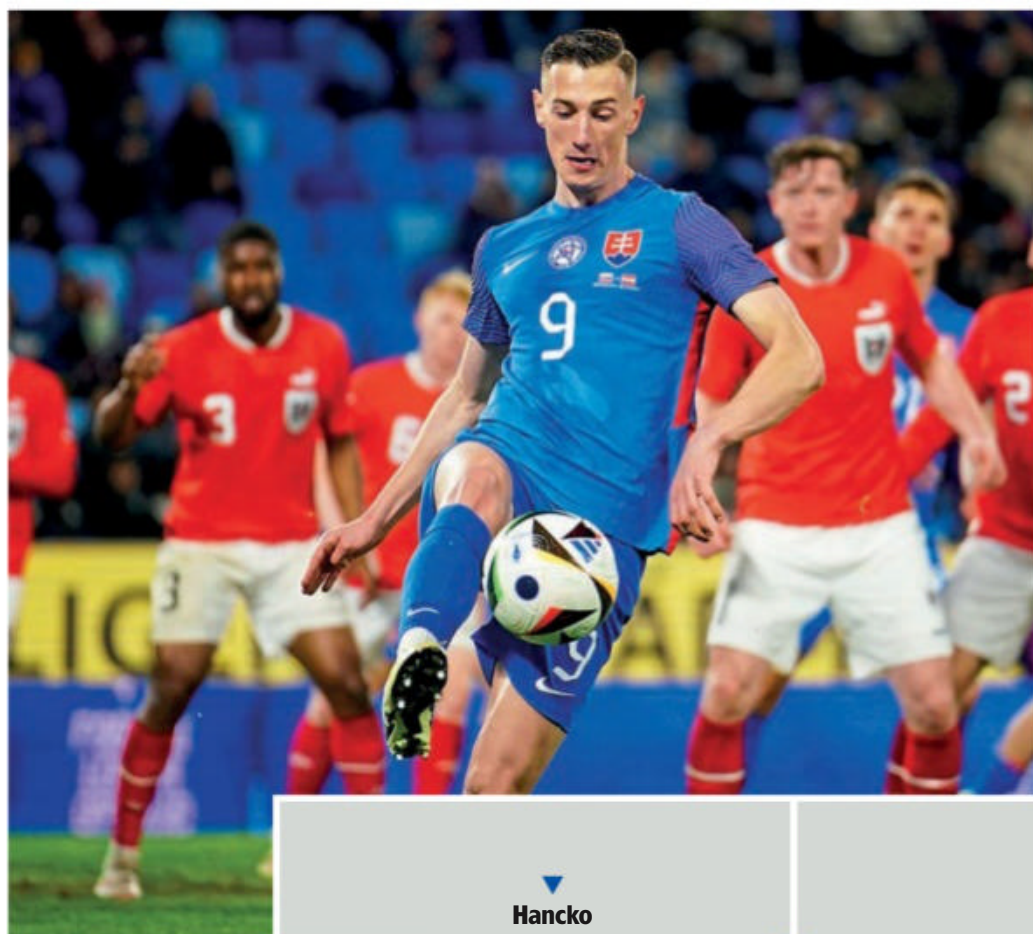
TACTICS

Experienced, solid foundations

Calzona is a solid 4-3-3 man, his formation underscored by two long-established lines of defence and midfield to build around. Given that two of those seven starters are now 37 – right-back Peter Pekarik and midfielder Juraj Kucka – Calzona knows he will probably have to bring on fresh legs sooner rather than later, as seen in the vital qualifier away to Portugal. In the relentless pressure of tournament football, this may be an issue.

Fellow veteran, Martin Dubravka, has won back his place in goal thanks to his top displays for Newcastle. With Hamsik in the management team, the back four of Pekarik, Denis Vavro, Milan Skriniar and David Hancko, and midfield trio of Kucka, Stanislav Lobotka and Ondrej Duda, Slovakia have got the old gang back together. Lobotka is revelling in his regular starts at Napoli where Calzona is currently also coach. Sub Laszlo Benes is used off the bench as a joker in midfield, while Patrik Hrosovsky can fill in too.

Free-scoring Robert Bozenik should don the No.9 shirt, with Ivan Schranz to his right. To their left, the ageing Robert Mak provides width, but Lukas Haraslin is more likely to find the net. The young, left-footed Tomas Suslov will almost certainly see action, probably as a sub.



Free-scoring
centre-forward...
Robert Bozenik

Veteran full-back
...Peter Pekarik



SCHEDULE

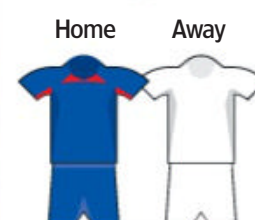
FRIENDLIES

Jun 5
v **San Marino**
(n, Wiener Neustadt)
Jun 9
v **Wales**
(h, Trnava)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 17
v **Belgium**
(Frankfurt)
Jun 21
v **Ukraine**
(Dusseldorf)
Jun 26
v **Romania**
(Frankfurt)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM SLOVAKIA



"When I first heard that Francesco Calzona was going to be the coach I was sceptical, but he seems to have won the players over and the feedback I hear is good. Most of the main players have Italian experience, plus Marek Hamsik has been vital in his management position."

Szilard Nemeth, ex-Slovakia striker



"Even though our squad isn't the youngest or the most extensive, we've made a big step forward over the last two years and the players finally know what they're doing on the pitch. I would love to see Benes add creativity, but the midfield three is probably set in stone."

Titanilla Bod, sportnet.sme.sk



COACH

Francesco CALZONA (Ita)

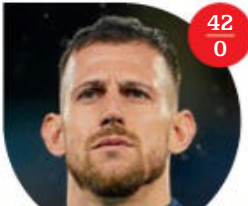
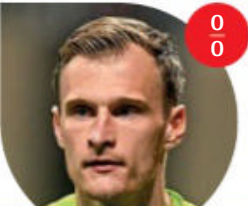
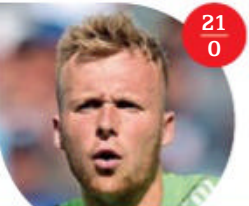
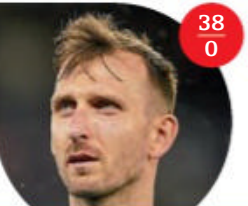
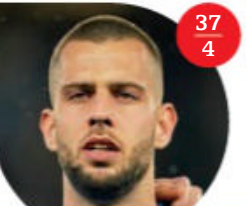
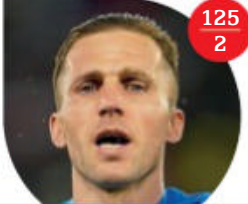
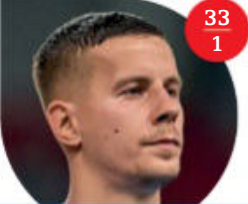
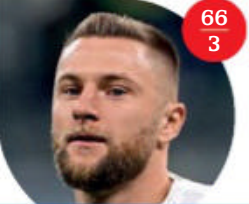
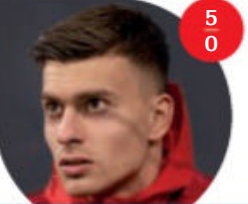
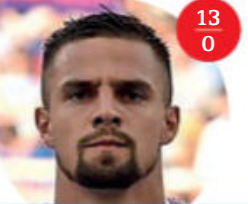
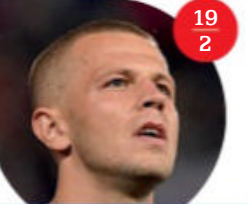
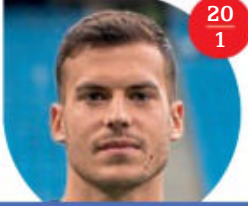
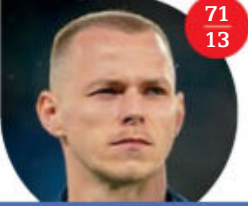
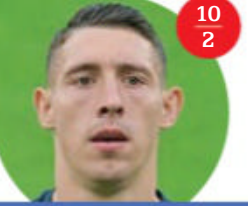
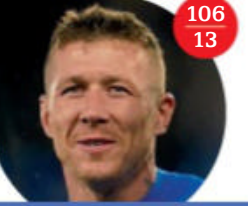
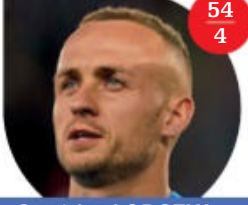
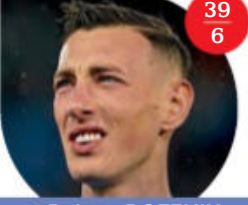
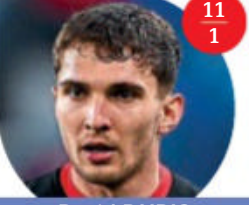
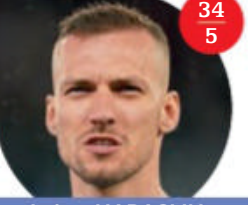
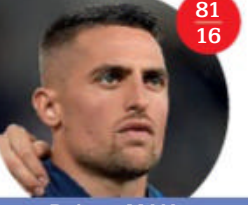
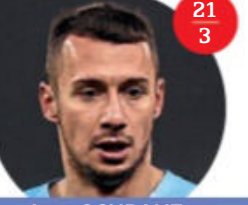
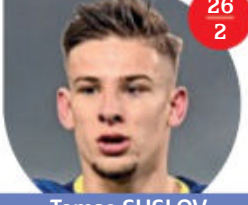
Age 55 (24.10.68)

Appointed August 2022

This likeable man from Italy's deep south spent 15 years in assistant coaching roles across his homeland before becoming Slovakia's first-ever non-Czechoslovak coach. Crossing paths with Marek Hamsik at Napoli, the little-known Calzona wound up in Slovakia, where his healthy working relationship with Slovakia's all-time hero has calmed dissenting voices. Even after taking on the Napoli job alongside it, he remains well regarded. With a solid XI, his squad only need tweaking where fringe players are concerned, assessed by Calzona on his many groundhops.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Martin DUBRAVKA Newcastle United (Eng) Age 35 (15.01.89) Still making vital saves in England, the veteran should be Slovakia's No.1 for consecutive Euros. Only missed one qualifier – when progression to Germany was in the bag.	 Henrich RAVAS New England Revolution (USA) Age 26 (16.08.97) Brought into the frame by Calzona, the previously unsung keeper has made a confident start in the US via Peterborough United, Boston United, Derby County and Hartlepool.	 Marek RODAK Fulham (Eng) Age 27 (13.12.96) Hero of the play-off penalty-shootout win over Republic of Ireland on the road to reaching Euro 2020, then lost his place. Benched at Fulham, a reserve role beckons again.	 Norbert GYOMBER Salernitana (Ita) Age 31 (03.07.92) Now back in the national set-up after being left out in the cold by previous coach Stefan Tarkovic. A versatile stalwart of the Italian game who can slot in easily at centre-back.	 David HANCKO Feyenoord (Ned) Age 26 (13.12.97) An Eredivisie champion in 2022-23, Slovakia's preferred left-back can also play at centre-back, scoring vital goals in Euro qualifying. The only player to start all ten qualifiers.	 Adam OBERT Cagliari (Ita) Age 21 (23.08.02) Given Slovakia's ageing backline and Calzona's liking of this young left-footed centre-back, the Euros might be his breakthrough. Debuted in Hamsik's first farewell game in 2022.
	 Peter PEKARIK Hertha Berlin (Ger) Age 37 (30.10.86) Still first-choice right-back for Slovakia if no longer at Hertha. Only Hamsik has more caps, and the 2010 World Cup stalwart will be making his swansong in Germany this summer.	 Lubomir SATKA Samsunspor (Tur) Age 28 (02.12.95) Reliable centre-back who has rebooted his career in Turkey and whose close-range shot bookended Slovakia's successful Euro qualification. Once on the books of Newcastle.	 Milan SKRINIAR Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 29 (11.02.95) Slovakia's captain left Internazionale for PSG under a cloud, but will be the first name on Calzona's teamsheet at the heart of the defence. A graduate of Zilina's academy.	 Michal TOMIC Slavia Prague (Cze) Age 25 (30.03.99) Given a couple of run-outs during the March friendlies after three appearances in qualifying. The right-back has made big progress and could nab a squad place.	 Martin VALJENT Mallorca (Spa) Age 28 (11.12.95) Regular appearances in La Liga for Mallorca should guarantee the centre-back some playing time at the Euros, though probably only as a sub or in the case of injuries.	 Denis VAVRO Copenhagen (Den) Age 28 (10.04.96) Rarely used in three years at Lazio, the tall, right-sided centre-back has rediscovered his form at Copenhagen, starring in their Champions League run this campaign.
	 Laszlo BENES Hamburg (Ger) Age 26 (09.09.97) Flair player who has found it hard to break into a settled midfield despite rising through the ranks from Under-16 level. Now starring at his fourth German club.	 Ondrej DUDA Verona (Ita) Age 29 (05.12.94) Despite unfair comparisons to Hamsik, the right-footed midfielder has been a Slovakia regular for the past decade. Like Kucka, he got two goals and two assists in qualifying.	 Dominik HOLLY Jablonec (Cze) Age 20 (11.11.03) A teenage success at Trencin and a mainstay of Slovakia's U19s, Holly is in the senior squad for his pace and youth. Will gain valuable experience this summer if not game-time.	 Patrik HROSOVSKY Genk (Bel) Age 32 (22.04.92) Now established at Genk after a decade at Viktoria Plzen. Rarely among the goals, the experienced midfielder is Lobotka's understudy and often replaces him late on in matches.	 Erik JIRKA Viktoria Plzen (Cze) Age 26 (19.09.97) Given Calzona's rigid three-man midfield, right-winger Jirka may not start but his shooting prowess might bring him into play later – especially if chasing a goal.	 Juraj KUCKA Slovak Bratislava Age 37 (26.02.87) Ageing like a fine wine, Kucka is back with coach Vladimir Weiss, Slovakia's boss for his breakthrough at the 2010 World Cup, at club level. Formerly of Watford, Parma and Milan.
	 Stanislav LOBOTKA Napoli (Ita) Age 29 (25.11.94) The midfield lynchpin is also playing under Calzona at Napoli, where he is now firmly established. Like Dubravka, he was an ever-present in qualifying until the final game.	 Robert BOZENIK Boavista (Por) Age 24 (18.11.99) Now happy and effective in Portugal, the well-travelled No.9 should spearhead the attack after playing second fiddle to Robert Polievka for large parts of qualifying.	 David DURIS Ascoli (Ita) Age 25 (22.03.99) A start in Slovakia's disappointing springtime friendlies indicates a more inclusive role for the regular substitute, who scored in Euro qualifying against Luxembourg.	 Lukas HARASLIN Sparta Prague (Cze) Age 28 (26.05.96) Regular scorer for club and country, Haraslin is happier back in Central Europe – and on the left side up front. Formerly on the books of Parma and Sassuolo in Serie A.	 Robert MAK Sydney FC (Aus) Age 33 (08.03.91) Racking up the air miles since his move Down Under, savvy Mak gives width to Slovakia's forward line. Won the FA Youth Cup with Manchester City back in 2007-08.	 Ivan SCHRANZ Slavia Prague (Cze) Age 30 (13.09.93) A late starter at senior level for Slovakia, wide forward Schranz has seen his star rise with Slavia Prague. Shared right-wing duties in qualifying with Mak and Suslov.
	 Tomas SUSLOV Verona (Ita) Age 21 (07.06.02) Slovakia's bright young hope is now teamed up with his compatriot Duda on the right flank at club level. Likely set for an impact sub role, but could push Schranz hard to start.	 Lubomir TUPTA Slovan Liberec (Cze) Age 26 (27.03.98) A regular in the youths since Slovakia's U17s, the much-travelled striker, now settled at Liberec, could edge out other attacking contenders like David Strelec and Leo Sauer.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

Dominik TAKAC (Spartak Trnava)

DEFENDERS

Vernon DE MARCO (Hatta, UAE), Matus KMET (Trencin), Tomas NEMCIK (Rosenborg, Nor)

MIDFIELDERS

Matus BERO (Bochum, Ger), Artur GAJDOS (Trencin), Christian HERC (DAC), Jakub KADAK (Luzern, Sui), Tomas RIGO (Banik Ostrava)

FORWARDS

Aleksandar CAVRIC (Kashima Antlers, Jpn), Robert POLIEVKA (Dukla Banska Bystrica), Leo SAUER (Feyenoord, Ned), David STRELEC (Slovan Bratislava), Adam ZRELAk (Warta Poznan, Pol) – injured



Back on the big stage

Slovenia's Euros debut is now a distant memory

It was 24 summers ago that Slovenia took on their former compatriots of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at Euro 2000 and took a shock 3-0 lead. If you're going to make your debut on the world stage, sweeping aside a host of Serie A stars and your recent political masters is a pretty good intro.

But Savo Milosevic and co. hit back to draw 3-3 and Slovenia, a small nation independent from Belgrade since 1991, had to settle for a point. A defeat to Spain and a goalless draw with Norway followed, and they haven't graced the Euros since. A fractious World Cup appearance in 2002, one win and a draw in 2010, and that's it in terms of major international tournament action.

Despite a spirited showing in a relatively easy Euro 2024 qualifying group, few in Ljubljana are expecting any surprises this time around. In the group stage, Slovenia face Denmark first, then Serbia, echoing Euro 2000, and finally England – coincidentally the last team they faced at a major tournament, in South Africa 14 years ago.

But here's where continuity comes in. Coach Matjaz Kek is back for a second term after overseeing Slovenia's creditable performance at the 2010 World Cup. And the national team director is Miran Pavlin, the man who scored in that dramatic Euro 2000 debut.

On the pitch, Slovenia have one genuine world star in goalkeeper Jan Oblak, now in his tenth season at



World-class goalkeeper
...Jan Oblak

It all adds up to a capable XI that can hold its own, even surprise, but there is little in the way of strength in depth. Slovenia is a country of two million people, all of whom ski. Its national football stadium holds 16,000. It has 60,000 registered players – England boasts nearly a million. Few head-to-heads at this summer's finals will have a greater disparity of resources.

At least Slovenia now has an identity. Supporters of the national team now wear foam headwear shaped like the Alpine peaks on its badge. True, they still have no nickname, and few teams are intimidated by the somewhat soulless Stožice Stadium on the outskirts of Ljubljana.

A generation ago, 10,000 Slovenians watched their team shock FR Yugoslavia in Charleroi. Many of the current squad won't even be old enough to remember the game, but they have the chance to create similar memories.

Peterjon Cresswell



It all adds up to a capable XI that can hold its own, even surprise, but there is little in the way of strength in depth

Atletico Madrid and still performing miracles in the Champions League. He controls the backline with the help of centre-back Jaka Bijol, a converted defensive midfielder who can read the game well, now in his second season in Serie A with Udinese. Ahead of him, 24-year-old Adam Cerin energises the midfield, linking with his Panathinaikos team-mate Andraz Sporar in attack. Now settled and scoring regularly, the former Middlesbrough loanee shares a strike partnership with Benjamin Sesko, a teenage prodigy from the Red Bull network begging for an international shop window.

MATJAZ KEK



What are your memories of Euro 2000?

One of the most important and beautiful events of Slovenian football. At that time, Slovenia began to break through to the European and world football scene. The generation led by [Srecko] Katanec is also a good example and a challenge to others.

Why do you think it took so many years for Slovenia to qualify for the Euros again?

Slovenia is a small country and the player base is not even close to that of the larger European countries. However, it's true that

Slovenia were in the play-offs twice, but we lacked a bit of luck. That's the past now, and the present is that Slovenia are at the Euros.

How would you describe your philosophy?

You try to adjust to the quality of players you have, and lift everyone with your own ideas to a level that brings a positive result. We need to be pragmatic but, above all, confident, courageous and decisive. That's how we were in the qualifiers. When the team has the ball and when it doesn't have the ball, these are the two basic starting points, not systems or subsystems, which are very popular today.

In your first spell as coach you led



Key midfielder...Adam Cerin celebrates scoring against Northern Ireland in Euro 2024 qualifying

Slovenia to the 2010 World Cup...

Unfortunately, four points wasn't enough and we only had ourselves to blame. We were leading 2-0 against the United States at half-time. Unfortunately it ended in a draw, which turned out to be crucial in a tough group. But it was Slovenia's first World Cup victory [against Algeria] and a beautiful experience with beautiful memories.

The final group match at Euro 2024 is against England, a repeat of 2010...

England are one of the favourites of this European Championship. They are a brilliantly-led team with brilliant individuals who I believe will play a significant role.

What do you think of the group overall?

The group is tough. We are certainly not favourites or considered an outsider by many. But the charm of football is that often a weaker national team defeats a better-ranked national team. We will be guided by the fact that we are going to the European Championship to compete and not just to please or be satisfied with the fact that we qualified.

How important could striker Benjamin Sesko be for you?

I think and hope that he will develop his talent enough to become one of the important

Rematch...Kek led Slovenia against England at the 2010 World Cup



players in European and world football. He has already done a lot for Slovenia, but he is a player with extraordinary potential and plenty of room to grow.

Can Slovenia make the knockout stages of a major tournament for the first time?

What kind of coach would I be if I didn't believe in my team? We will definitely prepare with lots of desire and motivation. This group is full of character, confidence and determination. And all the players are connected with each other and the coaching staff. That is one of the greatest qualities of the Slovenian national team.

Samindra Kunti



TACTICS

Old-school 4-4-2

Kek is unwavering in his 4-4-2 formation, within which there's scope for width and movement. Thanks to a world-class keeper in Jan Oblak and a commanding centre-back in Jaka Bijol, partnered by Miha Blazic, Slovenia have a solid foundation to build on. In Erik Janza, Kek has found reliable left-back cover and in Zan Karnicnik, a right-back whose life is made easier by having a natural right-back ahead of him on that flank, Petar Stojanovic. Ahead of Janza, winger Jan Mlakar raids his flank with fewer defensive responsibilities.

Stop box-to-box midfielder Adam Cerin, and you stifle Slovenia, which is why Stojanovic spends much of the game putting in vital tackles around him. Raised at Derby County and schooled in lower-league football in England, midfielder Timi Elsnik is no slouch either when it comes to putting his foot in when needed.

All season at Panathinaikos, Cerin has been supplying Andraz Sporar with chances, an understanding that should serve the Slovenians well in Germany. Strike partner Benjamin Sesko is not only a decade younger, he's 6ft 5in tall, nimble with it and just finding the sort of scoring form at RB Leipzig that had previously fired Red Bull Salzburg to yet another title in Austria in 2022-23. Zan Vipotnik can fill in when either forward starts to flag.



Box-to-box
midfielder...
Adam Cerin

One to watch...
young striker
Benjamin Sesko



SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Armenia**
(h, Ljubljana)
Jun 8
v **Bulgaria**
(h, Ljubljana)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 16
v **Denmark**
(Stuttgart)
Jun 20
v **Serbia**
(Munich)
Jun 25
v **England**
(Cologne)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM SLOVENIA



"Adam Cerin has come from nowhere to be a great box-to-box midfielder; for me, he has been a revelation this season. We will need to be at the very top of our game and play three perfect matches to qualify but, with four third-placed teams going through, who knows?"

*Andrej Miljkovic,
football specialist at Ekipa*



"It's always special when we play against England, because I was there for many years. Right now, we're playing as a team, there's a great spirit, and a good connection between players and staff. It's a pleasure to watch and I hope we play at least four games at the Euros."

Robert Koren, ex-Slovenia midfielder

COACH



Matjaz KEK

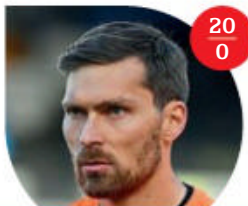
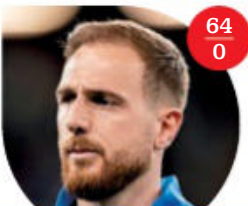
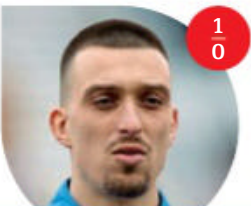
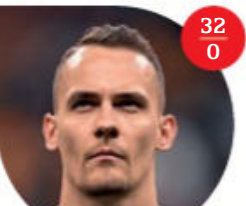
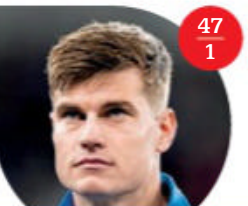
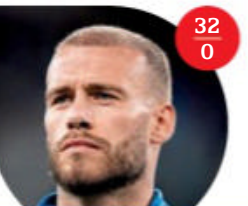
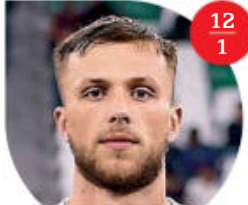
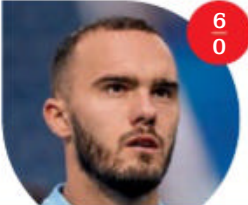
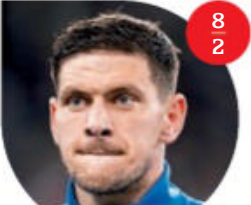
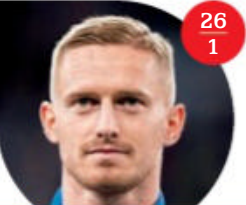
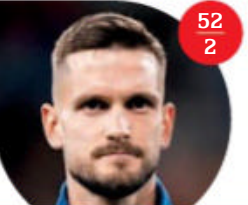
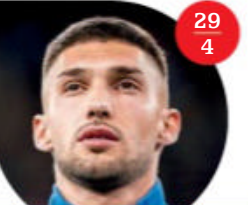
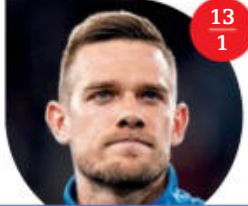
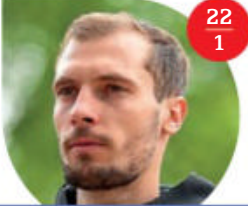
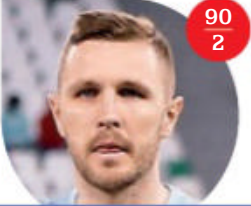
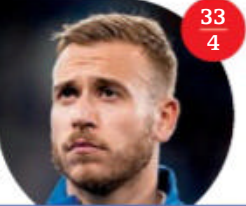
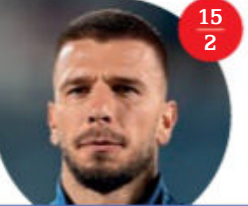
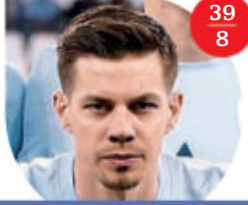
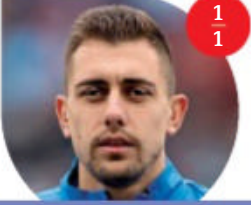
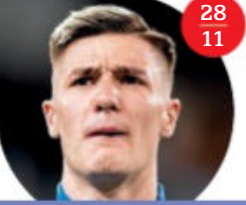
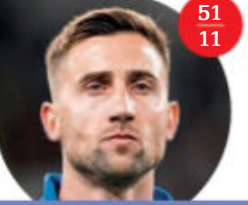
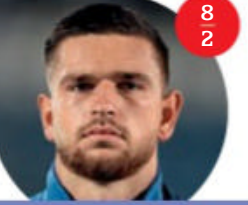
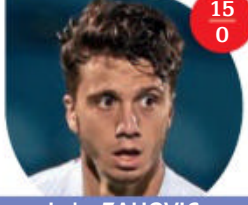
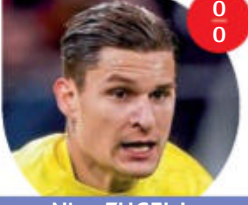
Age 62 (09.09.61)

Appointed November 2018

Few know Slovenian football as well as Kek. A Maribor man with five league titles to his name, two as coach, he led Slovenia at their last major finals, beating Russia in the play-offs to qualify for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. After a brief spell in Saudi Arabia he led Rijeka to the Croatian league title, breaking Dinamo Zagreb's long domination. Now, the motivational coach has steered his young, unsung countrymen back onto the international stage. In 2010, his team faced England in their last game, as an edgy 1-0 defeat cost them a place in the knockouts. Kek will be keen to avenge.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Vid BELEC APOEL (Cyp) Age 33 (06.06.90) Pity the poor understudy to a national hero, but loyalty and longevity have kept giant keeper Belec in the frame. Stood in for Oblak once during the qualifiers.	 Jan OBLAK Atletico Madrid (Spa) Age 31 (07.01.93) Slovenia's captain – garlanded with major awards at club level – is finally making his major tournament debut for his country. An imposing figure and fine shot-stopper.	 Igor VEKIC Vejle (Den) Age 26 (06.05.98) Somewhat looking to the future, Kek fielded Vekic for the friendly against the United States in January, his senior debut, after several caps at various youth levels.	 Jure BALKOVEC Alanyaspor (Tur) Age 29 (09.09.94) Journeyman left-back at the likes of Domzale, Bari, Verona and Fatih Karagumruk, who will provide valuable cover should the need arise in a limited squad.	 Jaka BIJOL Udinese (Ita) Age 25 (05.02.99) Slovenia's defensive lynchpin is now back from injury to marshal the backline for club and country. One of three players – with Cerin and Karnicnik – to start every qualifier.	 Miha BLAZIC Lech Poznan (Pol) Age 31 (08.05.93) Preferred centre-back partner for Bijol who earned his spurs winning regular league titles with Ferencvaros in Hungary. Also played a season in Ligue 1 with Angers.	
	 David BREKALO Orlando City (USA) Age 25 (03.12.98) Centre-back, previously a regular in the Under-19s and Under-21s, still finding his feet in Florida after seven years at modest clubs. Deputised for Blazic four times in qualifying.	 Vanja DRKUSIC Sochi (Rus) Age 24 (30.10.99) Reliable performances at unfashionable clubs – Sochi in Russia and previously Bravo in his homeland – have kept sturdy centre-back Drkusic in national contention.	 Erik JANZA Gornik Zabrze (Pol) Age 30 (21.06.93) Made the left-back spot his own, winning the vast majority of his caps during the qualifying campaign, probably ensuring his place in the back four for Germany this summer.	 Zan KARNICNIK Celje Age 29 (18.09.94) Slovenia's first-choice right-back has rarely let them down, while picking up league titles at three clubs in two countries. Also filled in at left-back during the qualifiers.	 Petar STOJANOVIC Sampdoria (Ita) Age 28 (07.10.95) Dependable on the right flank directly in front of Karnicnik, the nine-time title winner in Slovenia (Maribor) and Croatia (Dinamo Zagreb) is now on loan at Samp from Empoli.	MIDFIELDERS	 Adam CERIN Panathinaikos (Gre) Age 24 (16.07.99) Grown into the role of midfield dynamo for his country, the playmaker has since assumed the same mantle in Greece. The only man to play every minute in qualifying.
	 Timi ELSNIK Olimpija Ljubljana Age 26 (29.04.98) Winning a league title in Ljubljana after running out for the likes of Swindon, Mansfield and Northampton, the former Derby County youth player partners Cerin in midfield.	 Jon GORENC STANKOVIC Sturm Graz (Aut) Age 28 (14.01.96) Tall defensive midfielder, also handy at centre-back. Gained valuable Premier League experience at Huddersfield Town before regular appearances in Austria's Bundesliga.	 Jasmin KURTIC Sudtirol (Ita) Age 35 (10.01.89) No-fuss midfielder usually deployed to close a game down when calmness and possession are required. In the squad since 2012 and has eight Italian clubs on his CV.	 Sandi LOVRIC Udinese (Ita) Age 26 (28.03.98) All-purpose midfielder who swapped Austrian representation at youth level for senior caps for Slovenia. Club-mate of centre-back Bijol and very handy midfield cover.	 Jan MLAKAR Pisa (Ita) Age 25 (23.10.98) Fine performances at revived Hajduk Split earned winger Mlakar a move to Pisa in Serie B. Likely ahead of Benjamin Verbic in the battle for the left-wing berth.		 Benjamin VERBIC Panathinaikos (Gre) Age 30 (27.11.93) Partnered with compatriot Cerin in Athens, Verbic is a left-winger who scores goals, including Slovenia's late winner against Kazakhstan to seal Euro qualification.
 Miha ZAJC Fenerbahce (Tur) Age 29 (01.07.94) Proven quality as a creative midfielder for his country, but injury this winter may mean the experienced <i>trequartista</i> is kept in reserve in Germany. First capped in 2016.	 Zan CELAR Lugano (Sui) Age 25 (14.03.99) Prolific in the Swiss Super League this winter, the former U21 regular needs to find the net for his country. Like Sporar, Vipotnik and Sesko, he is over 6ft.	 Nejc GRADISAR Fehervar (Hun) Age 21 (06.08.02) Springing from Rogaska's rise to Slovenia's top flight, the young centre-forward scored on his international debut against the United States in January before heading to Hungary.	 Benjamin SESKO RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 21 (31.05.03) Sporar's lanky strike partner has come through the famed Red Bull system to impress at club and international level. Massive potential and could be set for a big summer move.	 Andraz SPORAR Panathinaikos (Gre) Age 30 (27.02.94) Rediscovering his scoring touch with compatriot Cerin in Greece, the former Middlesbrough warhorse will lead Slovenia's charge from the front in Germany.	 Zan VIPOTNIK Bordeaux (Fra) Age 22 (18.03.02) Called up by fellow Maribor old boy Kek in 2023 to become a regular for Slovenia as a sub striker. Won all his caps so far during Euro qualifying. Another striker over 6ft.		
FORWARDS	 Luka ZAHOVIC Pogon Szczecin (Pol) Age 28 (15.11.95) Son of Slovenia's most famous footballer and record scorer, Zlatko, Luka has settled in Poland after five titles with Maribor and an unsuccessful spell with Heerenveen.	 Nino ZUGELJ Bodo/Glimt (Nor) Age 24 (23.05.00) A title winner in two countries, the tall forward was first called up in November, yet is still uncapped, having appeared at four different youth levels for Slovenia.					
	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Klemen MIHELAK (Mura), Matevz VIDOVSEK (Olimpija Ljubljana) DEFENDERS Mitja ILENIC (New York City FC, USA), Sven KARIC (Maribor), Srdjan KUZMIC (Viborg, Den), Zan ZALETEL (Viborg, Den), David ZEC (Celje) MIDFIELDERS Domen CRNIGOJ (Reggiana, Ita), Tomi HORVAT (Sturm Graz, Aut), Jan REPAS (Maribor), Danijel STURM (Domzale), Tamar SVETLIN (Celje), Adrian ZELJKOVIC (Spartak Trnava, Svk) FORWARDS Aljosa MATKO (Celje), Andres VOMBERGAR (Ittihad Kalba, UAE)						



Daring to dream again

Victory in the Nations League has boosted Spanish hopes, although doubts still remain

Eleven years and five major tournaments later, with all but one of those winners, Jesus Navas, now gone and the days when they dominated everyone disappearing into the distance, Spain at last lifted a trophy again. It was only the Nations League, sure, but victory over Croatia last summer reconnected the *Seleccion* with the feeling of triumph. Having reached the final in the previous edition, where they were unfortunate to lose to France, and having beaten Italy en route both times, it also brought back the belief that maybe they can compete again.

These have been difficult years. Three tournament wins in a row – world champions in 2010, either side of Euros successes – were a weight upon them and were followed by failure. In 2014, 2016 and 2018, Spain did not win a knockout game. At Euro 2020, they reached the semi-finals where, despite defeat, they played superbly against Italy and something seemed to be building under Luis Enrique. They might not have had the names they once did or that other nations do, but arriving in Qatar midfielder Rodri insisted that collectively they were the best side there. And they began by putting seven past Costa Rica. But it all slipped away against Germany, Japan and then Morocco, Spain falling at the first knockout hurdle again, the fatalism returning.

Luis Enrique swiftly exited and Luis

Six successive wins brought stability, not least for a coach under pressure

de la Fuente took over. There were doubts – promoted from within, the former Under-21 coach had almost no elite experience – and when Spain were beaten 2-0 in Scotland at the start of Euro 2024 qualifying, those doubts multiplied. They had defeated Norway in their opening game but that was without Erling Haaland, and it had taken Joselu to come on and score twice in two minutes on his debut, two days before his 33rd birthday. To a backdrop of institutional problems, and later full-blown crisis, many feared they wouldn't get to Germany at all. Instead, Spain had it all wrapped up with two games



Back to winning ways... Spain lift the UEFA Nations League trophy

to spare. Six successive wins brought stability, not least for a coach under pressure. The Nations League success suggested even greater ambitions.

Rodri had become recognised as perhaps the world's best in his position – probably the only Spain player who could claim that – and others were also emerging. Robin Le Normand, like another French-born defender Aymeric Laporte, gained a Spanish passport, helping resolve their centre-back problem. And 16-year-old Lamine Yamal, plus 21-year-old Nico Williams, give them excitement in wide positions. Optimism is tempered by injuries to midfield duo Pedri and Gavi, the draw has delivered a group of death, there have been false dawns before, and as Pablo Sarabia insisted: "The favourites label would only damage us". But the fact that anyone would even dare suggest they might be candidates again was a start.

Sid Lowe



LUIS DE LA FUENTE



Are Spain in a position to win the Euros?

Spain are in a position to fight to win it. There are a thousand details that decide if you win, but we're at the same level as the best teams.

The idea is increasingly clear...

I think so. We set a course, a path to follow, and I think that is recognisable. We wanted a versatile team, with different ways of attacking, and we have scored different types of goals over this period. We have also found a solid defensive base. Against Brazil in our last preparation game, we made mistakes

and we know that at the highest level that can be what decides a game – that was a positive lesson for us. The team has grown and the feeling is that it can go a long way.

Where does your idea come from?

I was coached by 18 different coaches in my career and I have learnt from them all. I have spoken to many more over the years. You have your experiences. That all gets mixed together and a footballing idea comes out. Ever since I was a player I was attack-minded and the teams I have coached have that idea, but I always want balance. I have evolved too.

Did working with Spain's youth teams –



The world's best in his position...Spain midfielder Rodri

the U19s, the U21s, the Olympic team – help when you took over the senior side?

That has been an exceptional experience, where I began to interpret football in a different way....I said I had an advantage which was that I knew all the players, from the age of 15. That has given me the confidence to explain to them what I want of them, to continue being the same me. They know me, know I haven't changed, and that gives me credibility. It makes us stronger and helps my message reach them better.

Not many teams have the kind of young, exciting forwards Spain have with Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, plus Dani Olmo

who you have tried in a central role...

Those three forwards are among the best in the world, and it's not just them: forwards are good because the lines behind them are too. We have a team that excites us, that has created expectation because the potential is very high. We have the foundations upon which to construct something important. I'm pleased with the variety of options we have. Beyond the tactical structure – 4-2-3-1, 4-3-3 – I believe in an idea and we think those structures fit the players we have. We have a lot of confidence in this group, which has the ambition and desire we want.

Nations League final... De la Fuente directs his team against Croatia



How do you choose your squad?

There are always circumstances that change things – injuries are the worst thing in football – but everyone can see very clearly what we have been building. As a starting point, I like to have two players for each position but that doesn't mean necessarily that it's two specific right-backs, two central midfielders, and so on. Sometimes a player who is versatile enables you to cover more than one position and that allows you to take an extra player somewhere. We have the players that allow us to put together a very strong squad.

Sid Lowe



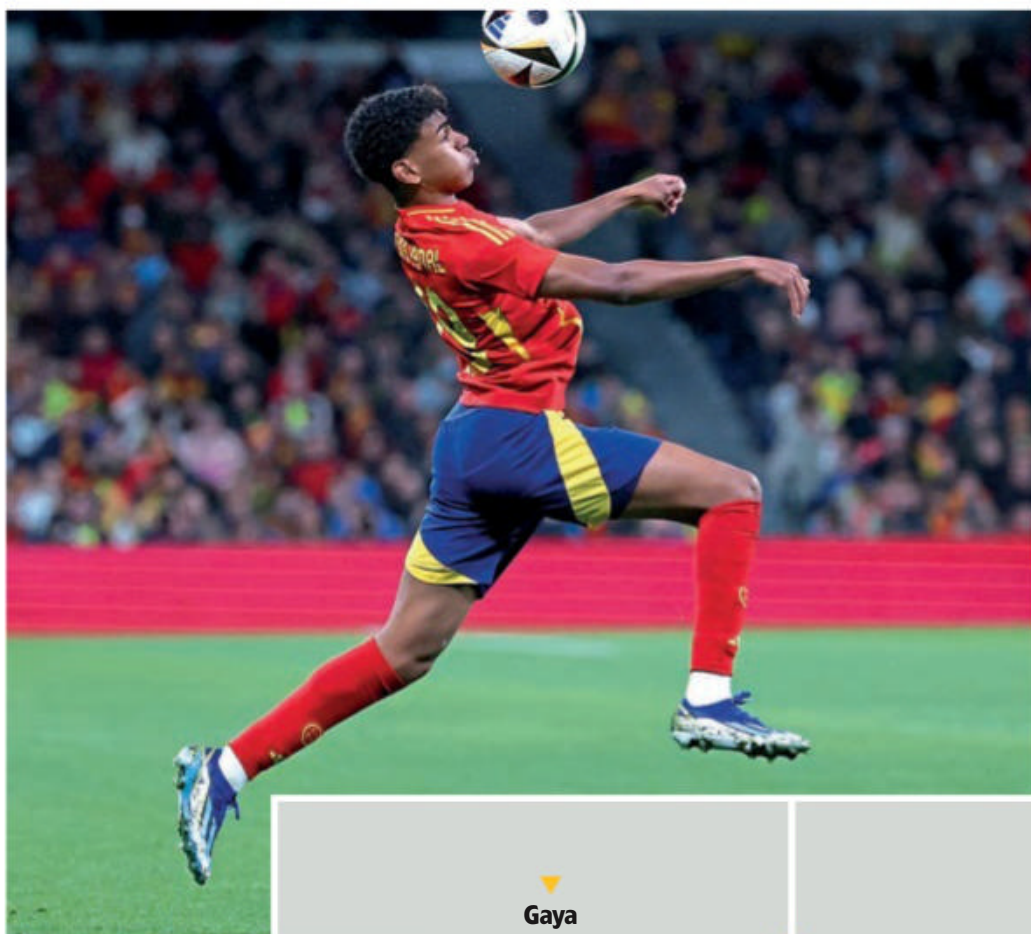
TACTICS

Undeniably Spanish

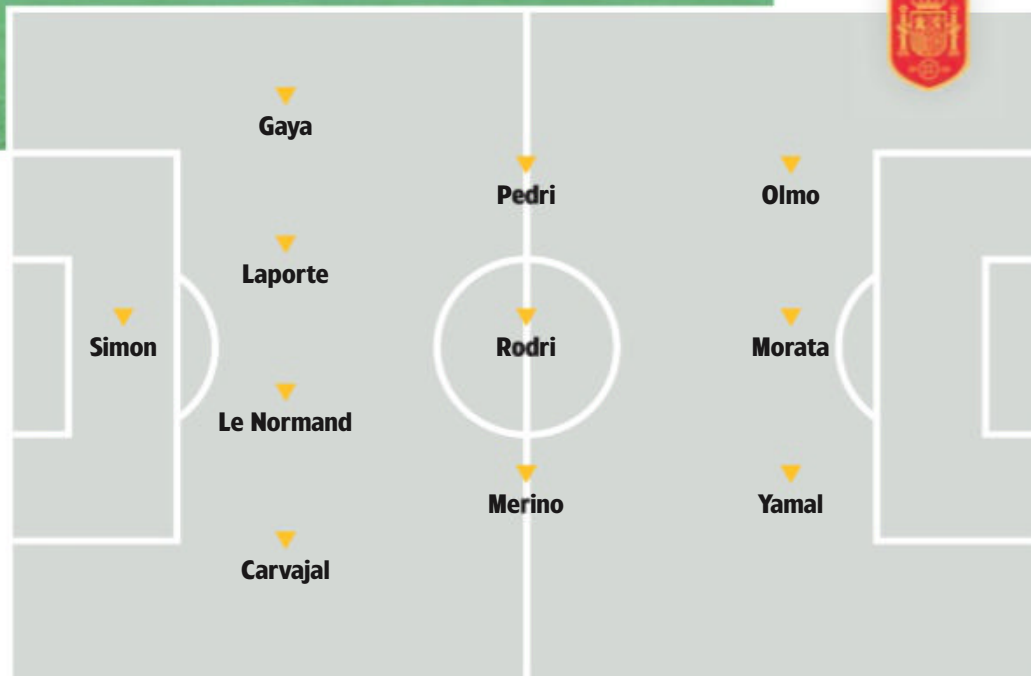
There was something familiar about Spain's elimination from the 2022 World Cup. Much like in Russia 2018, they had loads of the ball, but little cutting edge, almost becoming a caricature of the *tiki taka* style that had come to define them. As a result, when Luis de la Fuente took over as coach, there was an apparent determination to insist that things would be different. He talked about a non-negotiable idea and continuity – he had been coach of the Under-18s, Under-19s and Under-21s – but also insisted repeatedly on “nuance”, “adaptation” and “change”, on “enriching” their approach, a twist on *tiki taka*.

He had often used 4-2-3-1 rather than 4-3-3, and with the senior team tends to have two midfielders more parallel rather than one pivot. “I like to dominate the play, run into space, have different qualities,” he said. He wanted a No.9, not a false nine; wingers who run at defenders, given freedom; “long” full-backs; a midfielder that breaks from deeper.

And yet, the team is still a product of the players they have, an idea that's entrenched, and, despite talk of being more direct, the reality is that Spain remain recognisably Spain.



Exciting winger
...Lamine Yamal



Not a false nine
...Alvaro Morata

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 5
v **Andorra**
(h, Badajoz)
Jun 8
v **Northern Ireland**
(h, Palma)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 15
v **Croatia**
(Berlin)
Jun 20
v **Italy**
(Gelsenkirchen)
Jun 24
v **Albania**
(Dusseldorf)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM SPAIN



“The emergence of young talent in wide areas plus the presence of Rodri brings Spain hope. But there is uncertainty too because of the inexperience of the coach. Simon, Laporte and Morata may go some way to deciding if they can overcome the disappointment of Qatar. Dani Olmo and Pedri could also play key roles if fit.”

Rodrigo Errasti, Radio Marca



“There is a good young generation of players, like Lamine Yamal and Pedri, but don't put extra pressure on them. There's always that risk of comparing a Spain team to in 2008, 2010 and 2012 when we had a great generation, but I think this is a great generation too.”

Santi Cazorla, Euro 2008 and 2012 winner

COACH



Luis DE LA FUENTE

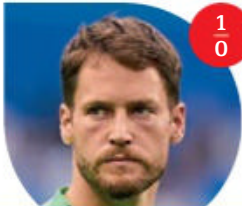
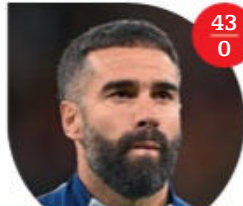
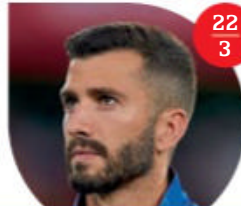
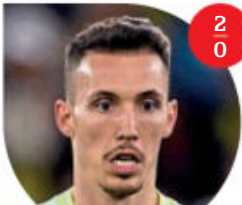
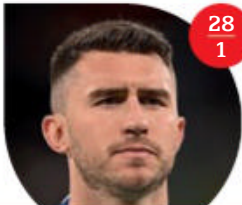
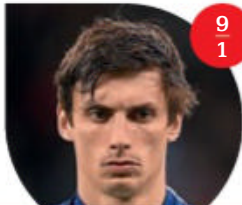
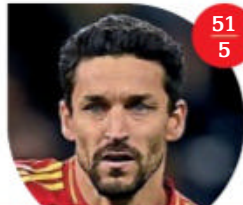
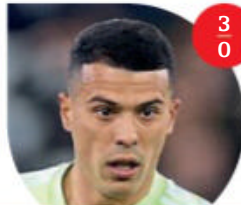
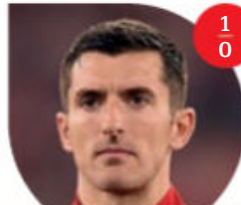
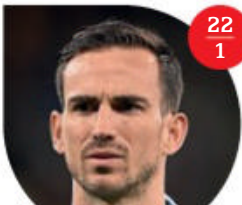
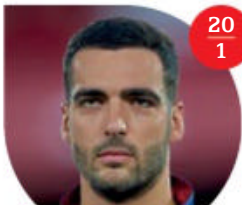
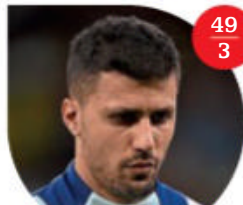
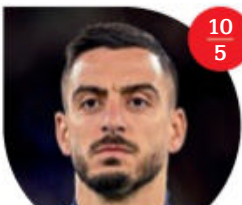
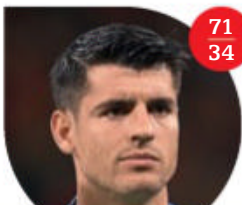
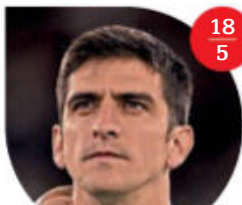
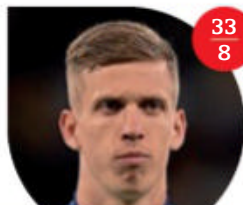
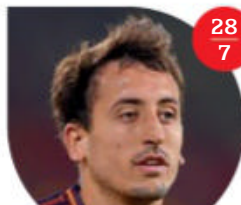
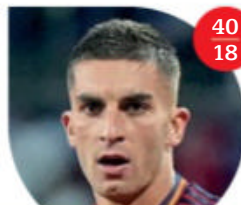
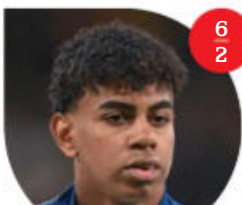
Age 62 (21.06.61)

Appointed December 2022

“I'm proud to be Spanish, Catholic and a bullfighting fan,” Luis de la Fuente said. Initially not a particularly popular choice, he had not coached a club in 11 years, and that had not lasted long. Things didn't start well either, a 2-0 defeat in Scotland raising huge doubts, and there was fierce criticism for applauding former president Luis Rubiales during his infamous assembly speech after the Women's World Cup. But since then results under De la Fuente, who had been successful with Spain's U19s and U21s, have been good and most have been won round.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 David RAYA Arsenal (Eng) Age 28 (15.09.95) Few in Spain knew who Raya was when he was first called up by Spain; impressive at Arsenal, they do now. Calm, and excellent with his feet.	 Alex REMIRO Real Sociedad Age 29 (24.03.95) Talented, intelligent goalkeeper who speaks eloquently about the importance of mental health and has had another exceptional season for his club.	 Unai SIMON Athletic Club Age 26 (11.06.97) Carries the "cheat-notes" from the Euro 2020 quarter-final penalty win v Switzerland everywhere, and had an even bigger shootout moment in the Nations League final.	 Dani CARVAJAL Real Madrid Age 32 (11.01.92) New broccoli-heavy diet seems to have obsessed everyone seeking an easy explanation for a brilliant and, more importantly, largely injury-free season.	 Pau CUBARSI Barcelona Age 17 (22.01.07) Got his first call-up after just 12 games for Barca, aged 17. "It has been a long time since I saw a defender like him", Robert Lewandowski says. Could be a revelation this summer.	 Jose GAYA Valencia Age 29 (25.05.95) Valencia captain who missed Qatar because of an ankle problem and has had dreadful luck with injuries and the national team. Should start at left-back if fully fit.
	 Alex GRIMALDO Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 28 (20.09.95) The first Spaniard to reach double figures for goals and assists this season. Formerly of Benfica, he has never played senior club football in Spain, but flying in Germany.	 Aymeric LAPORTE Al Nassr (KSA) Age 30 (27.05.94) The elegant, left-footed central defender is not enjoying life in Saudi Arabia; fortunately, that hasn't prevented him continuing to be called up for the national team.	 Robin LE NORMAND Real Sociedad Age 27 (11.11.96) Calm but uncompromising piano-playing Brittany-born centre-back, who got Spanish nationality in 2023 and has been a starter ever since. Forms a strong partnership with Laporte in defence.	 Jesus NAVAS Sevilla Age 38 (21.11.85) The last man standing from Spain's World Cup win in 2010 and European Championship triumph in 2012. Still flying at 38, albeit not quite as fast as he used to be.	 Pedro PORRO Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) Age 24 (13.09.99) "Let me loose in a prison and I'll end up owning the place," Porro insists, which says something about the Spurs man. Attacking outlet who inverts for his club.	 Dani VIVIAN Athletic Club Age 24 (05.07.99) Former judoka who was buying his mum a birthday cake when he got his first call-up in the spring. May be ahead of David Garcia and Pau Torres in the stakes to be central defensive reserve.
	 FABIAN Ruiz Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) Age 28 (03.04.96) Technical inside midfielder who was recalled to the squad by the incoming Luis de la Fuente having been absent since Euro 2020.	 Mikel MERINO Real Sociedad Age 27 (22.06.96) A complete midfielder and a fixture in the Spain side. Formerly of Newcastle United, Borussia Dortmund and Osasuna, and nicknamed "The Count" at his club.	 PEDRI Barcelona Age 21 (25.11.02) Gloriously talented, a smooth and graceful central midfielder with an outrageous passing range. Injuries have denied him continuity since Euro 2020. Missed all of qualifying.	 RODRI Manchester City (Eng) Age 27 (22.06.96) Broke an English record in March by reaching 59 consecutive games without defeat in all competitions for Manchester City. Simply irreplaceable for Spain.	 Oihan SANCET Athletic Club Age 24 (25.04.00) A different type of midfielder to the rest of the squad who gives Spain another option: vision, timing and an eye for goal arriving from deep. First capped in October.	 Martin ZUBIMENDI Real Sociedad Age 25 (02.02.99) Holding midfielder constantly compared to Xabi Alonso, which he says must bore the Leverkusen coach, only it's Alonso himself who admires Zubimendi most.
	 JOSELU Real Madrid Age 34 (27.03.90) Waited 15 years for his international debut and, aged 32, scored two minutes into it and again just one minute later. Good option from the bench.	 Alvaro MORATA Atletico Madrid Age 31 (23.10.92) National team captain who team-mates love. There are always question marks over Morata, but he averages a goal every other game for Spain. Will start as the No.9.	 Gerard MORENO Villarreal Age 32 (07.04.92) The Villarreal forward is a kind of nine and a half, with a superb touch and a special eye. Played at the Euros in 2021, but out of the picture until his recall in March.	 Dani OLMO RB Leipzig (Ger) Age 26 (07.05.98) The son and brother of footballers, Olmo has never played senior football in Spain but is outstanding for the national team. Cultured attacking midfielder.	 Mikel OYARZABAL Real Sociedad Age 27 (21.04.97) "There are no words to describe what he means to this team," says Real Sociedad coach Imanol Alguacil of the forward, who is set to be a key man for Spain too.	 Ferran TORRES Barcelona Age 24 (29.02.00) Declared himself "The Shark" having overcome doubts, only for injury to reduce his role again. Only Joselu and Morata scored more goals in qualifying.
	 Nico WILLIAMS Athletic Club Age 21 (12.07.02) Received his first Spain call-up the same week his brother and Athletic team-mate Inaki joined up with Ghana. Skilful, quick and fun to watch. Pushing hard to start on the wing.	 Lamine YAMAL Barcelona Age 16 (13.07.07) Quick, skilful, electric left-footed right-winger, Yamal is an extraordinary talent. He also turns 17 the day before the final, which would be some birthday gift.				

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS

KEPA Arrizabalaga (Real Madrid), Robert SANCHEZ (Chelsea, Eng), Alvaro VALLES (Las Palmas)

DEFENDERS

Alejandro BALDE (Barcelona) – *injured*, Marc CUCURELLA (Chelsea, Eng), David GARCIA (Osasuna), Eric GARCIA (Girona), Fran GARCIA (Real Madrid) Miguel GUTIERREZ (Girona), Inigo MARTINEZ (Barcelona), NACHO (Real Madrid), Pau TORRES (Aston Villa, Eng), Lucas VAZQUEZ (Real Madrid)

MIDFIELDERS

Alex BAENA (Villarreal), FERMIN Lopez (Barcelona), Aleix GARCIA (Girona), GAVI (Barcelona) – *injured*, Rodrigo RIQUELME (Atletico Madrid)

FORWARDS

Marco ASENSIO (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra), Ansu FATI (Brighton, Eng), Pablo SARABIA (Wolverhampton Wanderers, Eng), YEREMY Pino (Villarreal) – *injured*, Bryan ZARAGOZA (Bayern Munich, Ger)



Low confidence, low expectations

A talented squad is still suffering from a crisis of confidence after the humiliation in Qatar

Switzerland's recent appearances at major tournaments – they have qualified for the last five World Cups and now three successive European Championships – have usually been preceded by talk of a golden generation and taking the team to new heights. This time, however, there seems to be more trepidation than optimism.

As before, there is no doubting the quality of the Swiss squad. Nearly all the players are based in the top five European leagues and most are enjoying regular first-team football, something that was not always the case in the past. Yet recent performances, which include just two wins from their last nine internationals, have ranged from unconvincing to dismal.

Memories are still fresh of their humiliating exit from the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, with a 6-1 pummeling at the hands of Portugal in the round of 16. But confidence has dropped even further since then after they spluttered their way through an apparently straightforward Euro 2024 qualifying group with four wins, five draws and one defeat.

Recent performances, which include just two wins from their last nine internationals, have ranged from unconvincing to dismal

Switzerland began the campaign convincingly enough with victories over Belarus (5-0), Israel (3-0) and Andorra (2-1), but they then squandered a 2-0 lead in the last two minutes at home to Romania to draw 2-2. This should have been a one-off and the sort of momentary lapse that can affect any team. Instead, it seemed to play on the minds of the Swiss and, even when dominating against supposedly inferior teams, they looked vulnerable and shaky.

A 2-2 draw away to Kosovo soon followed after conceding a stoppage-time equaliser, then a month later they



Shell-shocked
...Swiss players
react to the draw
with Romania

had to come from 3-1 down at home to Belarus to salvage a 3-3 draw. They gave away another last-gasp goal in a subsequent 1-1 draw in neutral Hungary against Israel, and yet another in a 1-1 draw at home to Kosovo. Finally, they lost 1-0 in Romania to finish five points behind their opponents in second place and only two clear of Israel.

As a consequence of the mixed displays and results, criticism rained down on previously popular manager Murat Yakin. The performances were deemed so bad that there were even suggestions he could be sacked, and the Swiss

Football Federation (SFV) only confirmed that they would be keeping him on for the Euros four days before the draw in Hamburg.

SFV president Dominique Blanc insisted that they had "full confidence" in Yakin and he had their "support in all areas", but that sentiment was not widely shared among Swiss supporters.

Nonetheless, the undoubted quality within the squad still gives *Nati* followers plenty of hope, and a group-stage draw which pits them against hosts Germany, Hungary and Scotland is far from impossible to progress from.

Brian Homewood



MURAT YAKIN



How do you analyse your qualifying campaign for the European Championship?

In terms of the results, things didn't go as we'd hoped in some cases, and we had ourselves to blame for that. We didn't fulfil expectations in certain areas – especially in attack, where we unfortunately didn't take our chances.

You were very popular at the start of your tenure, but you have received some heavy criticism recently. How do you deal with that?



Silencing critics...
Switzerland captain
Granit Xhaka

I've been in the business for a long time, I've played football for a long time and I've been in the coaching business for a long time now. I know that you can't be too euphoric when things are going well and you can't be too critical when things aren't going well in terms of results. As a coach, you have to be positive and pull the team along.

Yann Sommer has excelled this season in goal for Internazionale, but did his experience at Bayern Munich affect him at all during the qualifiers?
I know Yann very well, I had him with me at Basel. He wasn't unscathed from his time at

Bayern. He needed basic confidence to be able to perform at 100 per cent. When he joined the national team, I spoke to him, of course. That wasn't the Yann I knew. He was under extreme pressure at Bayern, which he ultimately withstood. But that also showed that he's a strong goalkeeper.

Can you talk about your relationship with Granit Xhaka?
A few people have a little too much imagination when it comes to our relationship. There's no problem at all between Xhaka and myself. For me, he's also a very interesting personality

**Captain and coach
...Xhaka and Yakin**



off the pitch and I can talk to him about more than just football.

What sort of role will Xherdan Shaqiri play for you this summer?
Any player who can decide a game can still support the team in some capacity.

He's injury-free and healthy for the first time in a long time so as long as he can still help the team, he'll be a part of it. It won't be my decision that he has to stop, at some point the time will simply come.

Brian Homewood



TACTICS

Unconvincing experiments

Yakin's first move when he took over in 2021 was to replace predecessor Vladimir Petkovic's three-man defence with four at the back, and it worked well during the 2022 World Cup qualifying campaign. However, on losing right-back Silvan Widmer to illness for the last-16 clash with Portugal, he suddenly reverted to a back three – with disastrous results.

The four-man defence was reinstated for the majority of the Euro qualifiers, but Yakin experimented with three at the back again in March – a 0-0 draw in Denmark and a 1-0 win away to Republic of Ireland. That included winger Dan Ndoye deployed as a left wing-back, along with a variety of differing personnel in midfield and attack.

Whatever the system – and 4-3-3 still seems the most likely – the team revolves around skipper Granit Xhaka, who generally directs play from a deep midfield role, although he can also operate in box-to-box mode from the left channel.

In attack, it is unclear whether Xherdan Shaqiri will feature in the starting line-up or from off the bench, or whether Breel Embolo will recover in time from his latest injury setback. At present, Zeki Amdouni is favourite to lead the line with Ruben Vargas and Noah Okafor either side.



Midfield conductor
...Granit Xhaka



Leading the line
...Zeki Amdouni

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Estonia**
(h, Luzern)
Jun 8
v **Austria**
(h, St Gallen)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 15
v **Hungary**
(Cologne)
Jun 19
v **Scotland**
(Cologne)
Jun 23
v **Germany**
(Frankfurt)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM SWITZERLAND



"An underwhelming qualifying campaign and lack of attacking power could signal the end of the road for Switzerland's best generation to date. Most of the starting XI are in their 30s and new talent is scarce. Murat Yakin has unconvincingly tried new tactics this spring and will hope Breel Embolo can spearhead the attack."

David Lemos, RTS presenter



"The Euros is the last chance for Xhaka, Shaqiri and Sommer's generation. If the players put individual interests aside and develop a group dynamic, I think they can reach the semi-finals. Murat Yakin is at his best when his team are underdogs."

*Sebastian Wendel, football reporter,
Blick newspaper*

COACH

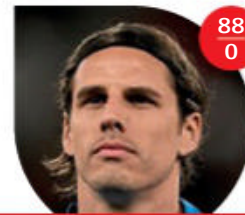
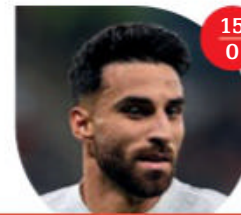
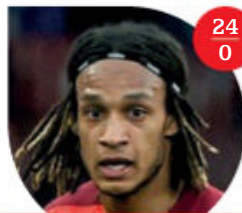
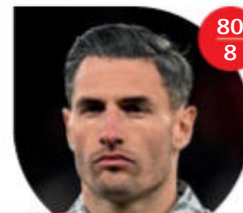
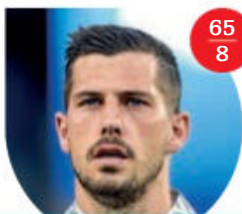
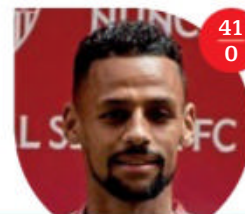
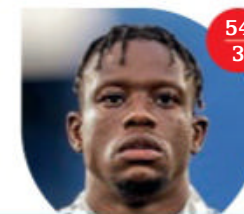
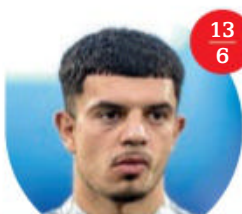
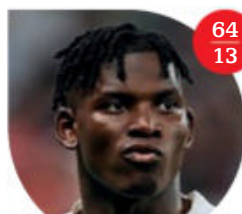
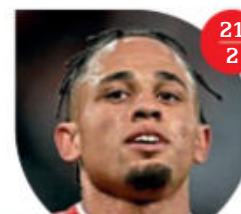
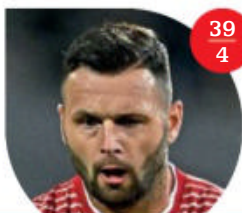
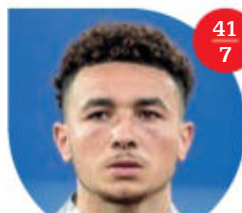
Murat YAKIN
Age 49 (15.09.74)
Appointed August 2021



A former centre-back who made 49 appearances for Switzerland between 1994 and 2004, the affable manager was a popular choice when installed after Euro 2020. That continued up to and during the 2022 World Cup – until his side were torn apart by Portugal. He made his name during a successful two years with Basel when he won successive Swiss titles, although his career since then has been a mixed bag. A coach who can think on his feet, his easy-going relationship with the players usually helps to get the best out of them.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 50 Gregor KOBEL B. Dortmund (Ger) Age 26 (06.12.97) Has spent his entire club career in Germany, at Hoffenheim, Augsburg, Stuttgart and Dortmund. Likely to be Switzerland's next No.1. Son of an ex ice-hockey player.	 80 Yvon MVOGO Lorient (Fra) Age 29 (06.06.94) Cameroon-born keeper who made his Switzerland debut in 2018, four years after his first call-up. Unused squad member at the last two Euros and 2018 World Cup.	 880 Yann SOMMER Internazionale (Ita) Age 35 (17.12.88) Switzerland's No.1 for the past decade. Has his club career back on track after a tough spell at Bayern Munich, showing impressive consistency at Inter.	DEFENDERS	 583 Manuel AKANJI Manchester City (Eng) Age 28 (19.07.95) Versatile defender who calmly brings the ball out from the back. One of only two players to play every qualifier. A maths genius who can solve calculations in seconds.	 150 Eray COMERT Nantes (Fra) Age 26 (04.02.98) Centre-back who is good on the ball and a strong passer, but his only start in qualifying came as a stand-in right-back. Should see off Zesiger and Omeragic as reserve centre-back.	 511 Nico ELVEDI Borussia M'gladbach (Ger) Age 27 (30.09.96) A product of the Zurich academy, Elvedi is a composed centre-back and first-choice partner for Akanji. A loyal Gladbach servant, enjoying his ninth consecutive campaign.	
	 71 Jordan LOTOMBA Nice (Fra) Age 25 (29.09.98) Right-back who can also fill in at left-back, which may see him edge out Ulisses Garcia for a squad place. Born in Switzerland but of Congolese and Angolan descent.	 240 Kevin MBABU Augsburg (Ger) Age 29 (19.04.95) Well-travelled right-back – playing for Servette, Newcastle, Young Boys, Wolfsburg and Fulham – who was overlooked in 2022 and 2023 but returned in March.	 1149 Ricardo RODRIGUEZ Torino (Ita) Age 31 (25.08.92) A regular since 2011, this will be his third European Championship. Excellent crosses and free-kicks, and equally adept at left-back or on the left side of a back three.		 808 Fabian SCHAR Newcastle United (Eng) Age 32 (20.12.91) Centre-back, with an eye for goal, known for his powerful long-range free-kicks and raking passes. First choice for his club, but currently below Akanji and Elvedi in the Swiss pecking order.	 413 Silvan WIDMER Mainz (Ger) Age 31 (05.03.93) Former Udinese and Basel right-back. A regular for Switzerland in 2021 and 2022, but missed most of qualifying through injury. Can play in a back four or as a wing-back.	MIDFIELDERS	 180 Michel AEBISHER Bologna (Ita) Age 27 (06.01.97) Defensive midfielder sporadically used since his debut in 2019. Has benefited from playing under Thiago Motta at Serie A's revelation side Bologna this season.
	 658 Remo FREULER Bologna (Ita) Age 32 (15.04.92) Intelligent all-rounder and a key part of Atalanta's remarkable rise. Now part of an impressive Bologna team, who he joined on loan from Nottingham Forest last summer.	 10 Vincent SIERRO Toulouse (Fra) Age 28 (08.10.95) A late developer, Sierro has captained Toulouse after joining the club last year, and made his debut in March. Vying with Uran Bislimi and Ardon Jashari for a squad place.	 410 Djibril SOW Sevilla (Spa) Age 27 (06.02.97) Versatile midfielder who covers a lot of ground. Powerful and strong in the tackle, he played every game in Qatar but was mainly restricted to sub appearances in Euro 2024 qualifying.		 20 Filip UGRINIC Young Boys Age 25 (05.01.99) Of Serbian descent, Ugrinic is comfortable on either wing or centrally and only made his Switzerland debut in November. Suffered a broken toe in February but will hope to be fit in time.	 12314 Granit XHAKA Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) Age 31 (27.09.92) Team captain and midfield conductor. Flourished under Mikel Arteta at Arsenal, and now enjoying great success at Leverkusen under another Spanish coach, Xabi Alonso.		 543 Denis ZAKARIA Monaco (Fra) Age 27 (20.11.96) Defensive midfield powerhouse. Has won back his place in the first XI, which he'd lost due to injuries and a lack of first-team football at Juventus and Chelsea.
	 136 Zeki AMDOUNI Burnley (Eng) Age 23 (04.12.00) Switzerland's leading scorer in the qualifiers with six goals, which, along with his prolific form for Basel, prompted Burnley to sign him last July.	 6413 Breel EMBOLO Monaco (Fra) Age 27 (14.02.97) Terrible luck with injuries, only returning in March after a nine-month lay-off with an ACL, the gifted Cameroon-born forward remains firmly in Yakin's tournament plans.	 10 Dereck KUTESA Servette Age 26 (06.12.97) The winger is now settled after a nomadic start to his career at Basel, St Gallen, Luzern, Reims and Zulte Waregem. Swiss caps from U15s to the U21s before his senior debut in March.		 90 Dan NDOYE Bologna (Ita) Age 23 (25.10.00) Another member of Thiago Motta's impressive Bologna team. Can play on the left or right wing, and was given the brief as a left wing-back in the springtime friendlies.	 212 Noah OKAFOR Milan (Ita) Age 24 (24.05.00) Versatile forward, used as a No.9 or on the left wing, who chose to represent the country of his birth over Nigeria, the country of his father. Mainly a sub at Milan since joining last summer.		 12130 Xherdan SHAQIRI Chicago Fire (USA) Age 32 (10.10.91) A veteran of four World Cups and two Euros, and Switzerland's second-most capped player. Can play as a winger or floating forward, and is always a threat with his long-range shooting.
FORWARDS	 394 Renato STEFFEN Lugano Age 32 (03.11.91) Previously at Thun, Young Boys and Basel, the left-footed winger moved back to Switzerland in 2022 after losing his place at Wolfsburg. Hit a hat-trick in qualifying against Belarus.	 417 Ruben VARGAS Augsburg (Ger) Age 25 (05.08.98) Diminutive winger with pace, panache and a low centre of gravity who has started regularly under Yakin. Born in Switzerland, his father hails from the Dominican Republic.						

ALSO IN CONTENTION

GOALKEEPERS
Jonas OMLIN (Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger), David VON BALLMOOS (Young Boys)

DEFENDERS
Loris BENITO (Young Boys), Edimilson FERNANDES (Mainz, Ger), Ulisses GARCIA (Marseille, Fra), Becir OMERAGIC (Montpellier, Fra), Dominik SCHMID (Basel), Cedric ZESIGER (Wolfsburg, Ger)

MIDFIELDERS
Uran BISLIMI (Lugano), Ardon JASHARI (Luzern), Fabian RIEDER (Rennes, Fra), Steven ZUBER (AEK Athens, Gre)

FORWARDS
Cedric ITTEN (Young Boys), Haris SEFEROVIC (Al Wasl, UAE), Andi ZEQUIRI (Genk, Bel)

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Progress stalled

Expectations of an exciting young squad have been tempered by some disappointing recent results

Turkey booked their place at this summer's Euros after impressively topping their qualifying group, but recent friendlies have raised questions ahead of the upcoming tournament.

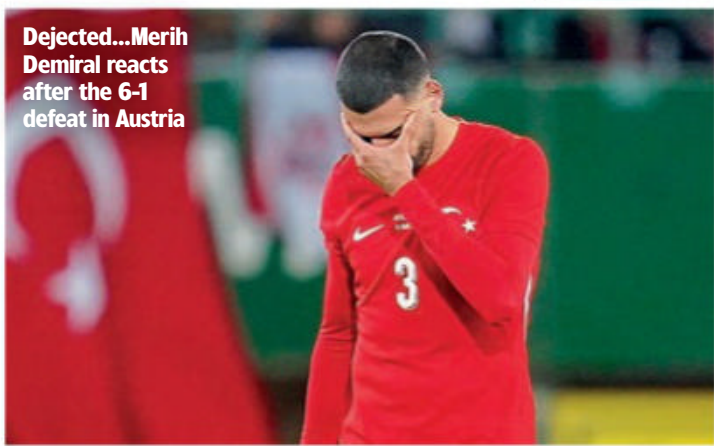
Coach Vincenzo Montella replaced Stefan Kuntz in September; the German was unpopular and most had lost faith that he could lead Turkey to the finals. Montella, who had cut his teeth in Turkish football with an impressive managerial stint at Adana Demirspor, rejuvenated the team with immediate effect.

The transformation stemmed from a strong tactical foundation, while skipper Hakan Calhanoglu emerged as the creative maestro and Montella showed his willingness to blood young talent. Real Madrid attacking midfielder Arda Guler and Juventus forward Kenan Yildiz have been introduced to the team with impressive effect. Nuremberg attacker Can Uzun got his debut recently and Besiktas forward Semih Kilicsoy could also find himself part of the squad this summer. All four are still teenagers.

Upon taking charge, Montella secured three consecutive wins, including statement away victories against Croatia and Germany. But March defeats to Hungary and Austria – a narrow 1-0 loss in Budapest swiftly followed by a humiliating 6-1 thrashing in Vienna – have raised concerns.

The heavy defeat sparked criticism in Turkey and hyperbolic reactions. The losses, though, could prove beneficial to

Dejected...Merih Demiral reacts after the 6-1 defeat in Austria



players have been playing well in the major European leagues, such as Calhanoglu at Internazionale, Yildiz at Juventus and Orkun Kokcu at Benfica.

Montella has also made use of players performing well domestically – something his predecessor ignored. Abdulkemim Bardakci, Ferdi Kadioglu, Kerem Akturkoglu and Baris Alper Yilmaz are among several important players who play in the Super Lig. This does feel like a team based on merit over big names.

Montella's approach is a work in progress and integrating the young players might disrupt team chemistry, but their talent is undeniable. The Italian does, however, have time to address defensive issues and refine his tactics before the tournament begins.

The key will be rediscovering the defensive solidity witnessed in qualifying when they conceded just seven goals. Possessing plenty of arsenal up front and youngsters with the potential to set the tournament alight, this is an exciting team – Montella just needs to harness all of that raw talent.

Emre Sarigul

Despite the recent setbacks, Turkey have reason to be optimistic

the team in the long run. There will be less talk about being "dark horses", and the team has been taught a valuable lesson about their defensive frailties.

Portugal will undoubtedly be their toughest group opponents this summer, but Czech Republic and Georgia should not be taken lightly either. Indeed, that has been one of Turkey's Achilles heels in the past – beating powerhouses like France and Germany, but at the same time losing to Austria and Faroe Islands.

Despite the recent setbacks, Turkey have reason to be optimistic. The core of the team boasts experience in major tournaments and several first-team

VINCENZO MONTELLA



When Turkey made it to the semi-finals of Euro 2008, they also played against Czech Republic and Portugal in the group phase...

Thoughts are bound to turn back to 2008. One difference is that back then Turkey were in pot 4 for the finals draw, while this time we were in pot 2 as winners of our qualifying group. What my 30 years in the game has taught me is that every match is difficult at this level, with very high standards. Not much separates all the qualified teams. You have to cut out the errors, you can't underestimate anyone. Expect the unexpected, I would say.

How much of an advantage is it that this European Championship is being hosted in Germany, where many Turks live?

The atmosphere at our games will be special. So many Turks have their homes in Germany, it will be like playing at home. I had a taste of this fervour when we beat Germany in Berlin in November. Our aim is to make those fans proud of us. It's our responsibility. One of the key priorities for me is to translate the obvious Turkish passion for the game to the national team's displays. I want to harness that spirit. I'm convinced it will be the case at the Euros.

What would constitute a good tournament?
What I want above all is for the boys to give





Attacking trio...Arda Guler, Hakan Calhanoglu and Kenan Yildiz celebrate

absolutely everything they have. At this level of football you have to be full-on, then we will see where that takes us. Naturally we have our dreams. We will give it our best shot. We've achieved one important goal. Now we have to prepare and build. Dreams only happen when you put in the hard work.

How satisfying was it to win 1-0 in Croatia in your first game in charge?

It was the perfect start for me. An historic victory and a marvellous night. We played with pride and passion against a top side, one that had gone far in the last two World Cups. Croatia do not often lose at home. Thanks to determination, hard work and

the unity of the group, we achieved a result which many thought was beyond us. It was a great platform for us to go on and finish top of our group, something Turkey had never done before in tournament qualification.

How important is your skipper Hakan Calhanoglu?

Hakan is a sensational player. I'd call him the best midfielder in Italy, perhaps the number one in the world as well. When I hear criticism of him, I can't understand it. At the age of 30, he's at the top of his game. He's mature, he's versatile, he reads the game brilliantly and

Coach and captain...Montella and Calhanoglu during their time together at Milan



is an expert at setting the tempo, knowing exactly when to accelerate or slow down the play. He's an extraordinary talent, who has come on by leaps and bounds since joining Inter a few years ago.

Who are your favourites for the title?

Big football nations like England, Italy, France and Spain will be there or thereabouts. Germany are at home and have the potential to go all the way. I'd say Belgium have a chance too. If I had to choose a winner, I'd go for France. They have a little more than everybody else.

Nick Bidwell



TACTICS

Flamboyant, youthful and exciting

Coach Montella favours 4-2-3-1, prioritising a possession-based game with fluid one-touch passing, but his side are also quick in transition and like to counter.

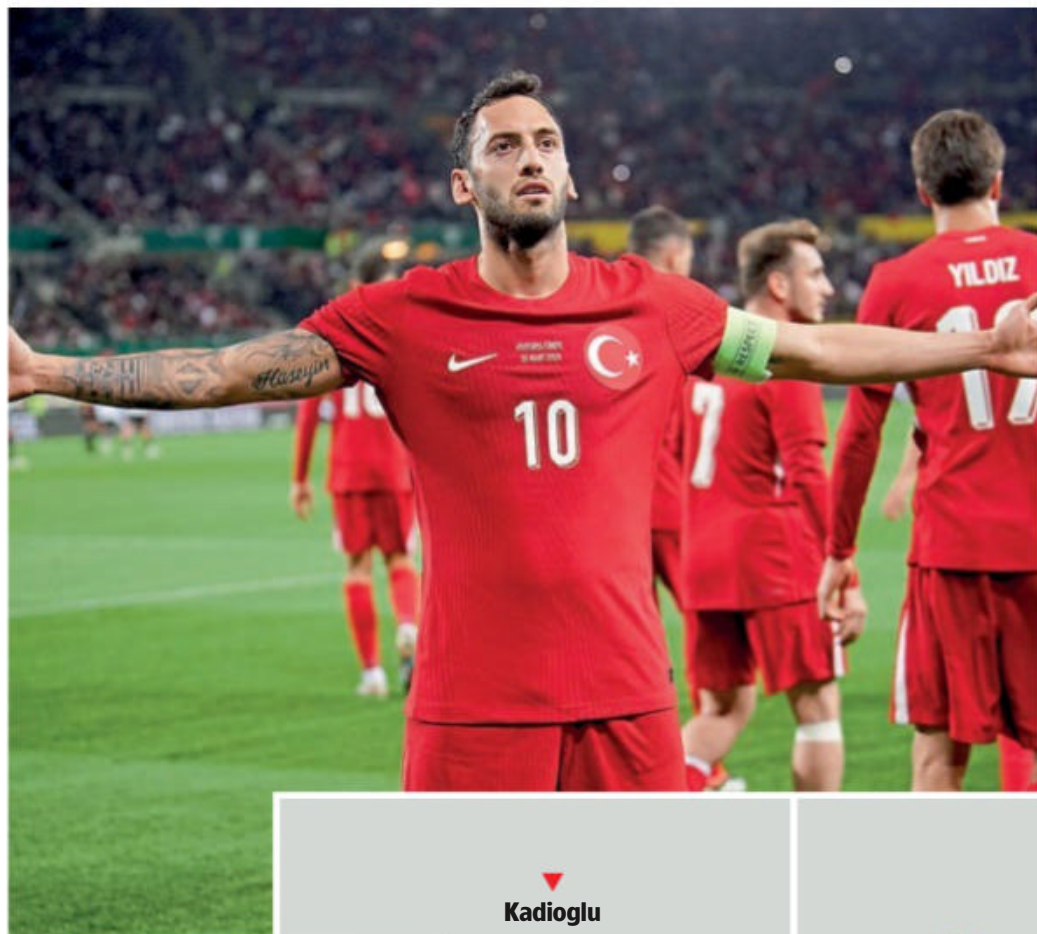
Play centres around Hakan Calhanoglu and rising star Arda Guler. Calhanoglu tends to play deeper while Guler occupies a more advanced role, with Orkun Kokcu offering another creative option.

Montella also likes to make use of his wingers and puts a heavy emphasis on stretching play. There are several candidates – Baris Alper Yilmaz, Kerem Akturkoglu, Irfan Can Kahveci, Yunus Akgun and Cengiz Under – while Guler and Kenan Yildiz could also play there.

Up front, Turkey have gone from having a striker crisis to an abundance of forwards. Yildiz, Baris, Can Uzun, Yusuf Yazici and Enes Unal can all lead the line.

The defence is also undecided, with Abdulkemir Bardakci perhaps the only player that can be confident of starting.

Montella has yet to work out his strongest starting line-up, but June's warm-up friendlies should give him a clearer picture. Whoever plays, expect a flamboyant, youthful, attacking side that will be exciting to watch going forward but could lack grit in defence.



Key player...captain
Hakan Calhanoglu

Likely starter
...centre-back
Abdulkemir Bardakci



SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 4
v **Italy**
(a, Bologna)
Jun 10
v **Poland**
(a, Warsaw)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 18
v **Georgia**
(Dortmund)
Jun 22
v **Portugal**
(Dortmund)
Jun 26
v **Czech Republic**
(Hamburg)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM TURKEY



"Turkey gained great momentum with Montella. The victory over Croatia and the 3-2 win in Germany took the motivation to a different level. In addition to young talents like Arda Guler and Kenan Yildiz, there are experienced stars such as Hakan Calhanoglu and Merih Demiral. Also, they will be like homeowners in Germany."

Yakup Cinar, Fanatik



"Turkey possesses the quality to top this group and compete at the highest level. In particular, the players born after 2000 are potentially a game-changing generation. Montella not being Turkish could actually be an advantage in uniting the team."

Necati Mete, ex-Fenerbahce communications director

COACH



Vincenzo MONTELLA (Ita)

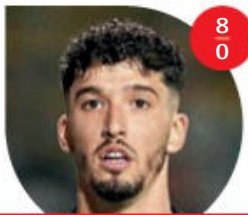
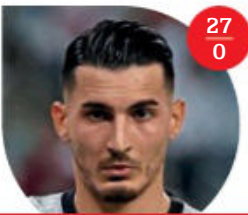
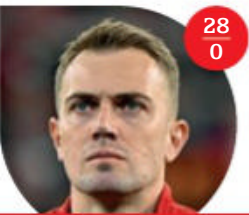
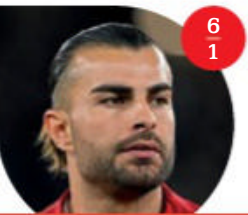
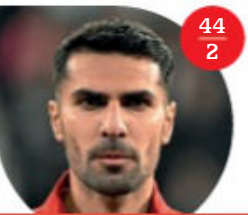
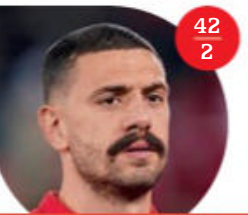
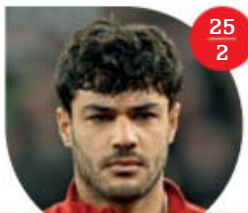
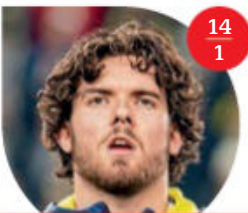
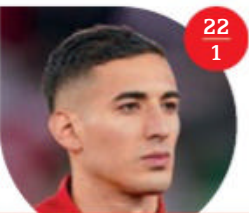
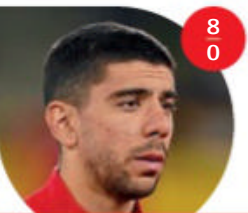
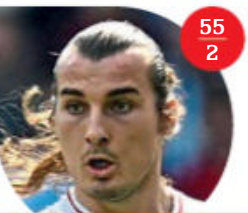
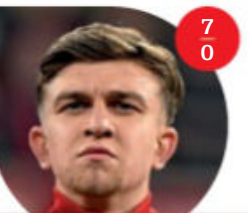
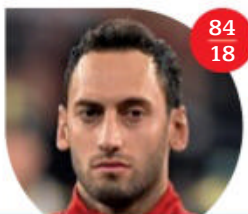
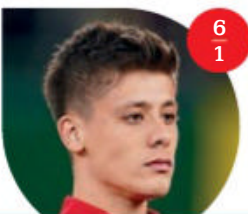
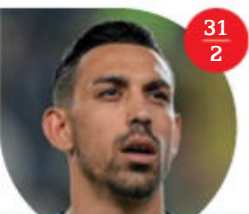
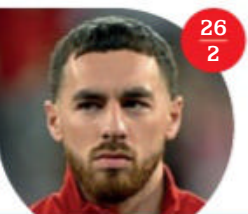
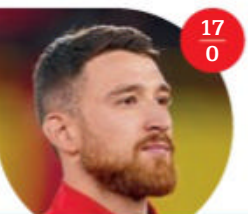
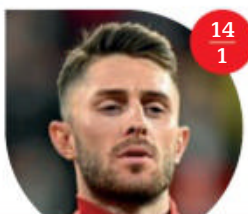
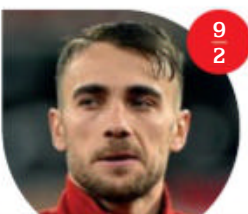
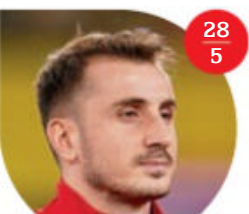
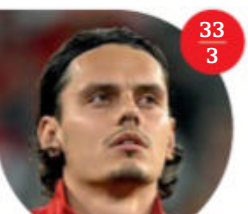
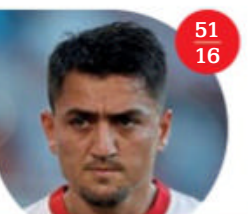
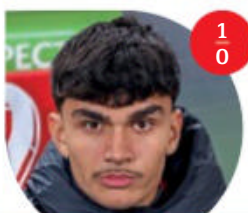
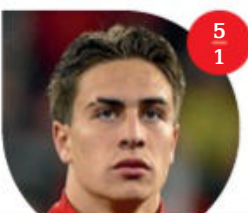
Age 49 (18.06.74)

Appointed September 2023

Montella injected a new lease of life into the team when he replaced Stefan Kuntz as coach. He earned the job by punching above his weight at Adana Demirspor, which gave him valuable experience and an insight into Turkish club football. The honeymoon period came crashing to an end after back-to-back friendly defeats in March, but they could prove a blessing in disguise. Turkey were dangerously close to entering Euro 2024 as dark horses; the last time they had that tag at Euro 2020, they crashed out in the group stage with three sorry defeats.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 80 Altay BAYINDIR Manchester United (Eng) Age 26 (14.04.98) Prospects uncertain after struggling for game-time at Old Trafford. Likely in a battle with Okan Kocuk, who is attracting growing domestic attention, for the third keeper's spot.	 270 Ugurcan CAKIR Trabzonspor Age 28 (05.04.96) Potential No.1 who played the last three qualifiers. Top reflexes and decent distribution, but suffers lapses in concentration. Confidence may be dented by the Austria defeat.	 280 Mert GUNOK Besiktas Age 35 (01.03.89) Turkey's most experienced keeper and a solid shot-stopper with a calming presence. Impressive in the Super Lig this season and many fans' preferred choice to start in goal.	DEFENDERS	 61 Abdulkemir BARDAKCI Galatasaray Age 29 (07.09.94) Galatasaray's star man in defence this season, powerful, brave and surprisingly good on the ball for such a burly player. Likely to be the first-choice centre-back.	 442 Zeki CELIK Roma (Ita) Age 27 (17.02.97) Reliable right-back who likes to attack, but a lack of club minutes could harm his chances of starting. Vying with Kadioglu, Muldur and perhaps Baris Alper Yilmaz who can also play right-back.	 422 Merih DEMIRAL Al Ahli (KSA) Age 26 (05.03.98) Raised eyebrows when leaving Atalanta for Saudi Arabia last summer. Injured for most of Montella's tenure, but now back fit. Has height, strength and aerial presence.
	 252 Ozan KABAK Hoffenheim (Ger) Age 24 (25.03.00) Enjoyed a renaissance as Hoffenheim's first-choice centre-back this season and could yet partner Bardakci. Very experienced for his age. Previously at Schalke and Liverpool.	 141 Ferdi KADIOGLU Fenerbahce Age 24 (07.10.99) A versatile defender who has been a star performer for his club this term at left-back. Started there in the win in Germany, but has mainly been used as a right-back by Montella.	 221 Mert MUL DUR Fenerbahce Age 25 (03.04.99) One of the quickest players in the squad – a big plus for Montella who wants pace on the wings – but may have lost the coach's trust after recent friendly defeats.		 80 Cenk OZKACAR Valencia (Spa) Age 23 (06.10.00) Tall and powerful left-footed centre-back, but all his starts under Montella have come at left-back. In a battle with the more dynamic Kadioglu and Yilmaz.	 552 Caglar SOYUNCU Fenerbahce Age 28 (23.05.96) Joined Fenerbahce on loan from Atletico Madrid to help boost his Euro 2024 chances. Battling Samet Akaydin, who Montella knows and likes from his Adana Demirspor days, and Kaan Ayhan.	 70 Ridvan YILMAZ Rangers (Sco) Age 23 (21.05.01) Attacking left-back who provides a constant threat down the wing. Has impressed in Scotland and in contention for a spot in the team, depending on Montella's approach.
	 8418 Hakan CALHANOGLU Internazionale (Ita) Age 30 (08.02.94) Creative midfield maestro, deadly from set-pieces and the conductor of the team. Playing a deeper roll these days to allow for the glut of attacking young talent.	MIDFIELDERS	 61 Arda GULER Real Madrid (Spa) Age 19 (25.02.05) Montella has his star man back just in time after being injured for the first half of the season. Has the talent to turn a game on its head and create something out of nothing.		 312 Irfan Can KAHVECİ Fenerbahce Age 28 (15.07.95) Right-winger or attacking midfielder with a tireless work-rate. Offers creativity and a real goal threat, but can be temperamental. Ex-Turkish Footballer of the Year.	 262 Orkun KOKCU Benfica (Por) Age 23 (29.12.00) Hasn't yet recreated his club form for the national team, but too talented to leave out. Montella is still trying to find the Dutch-born playmaker's best position in the side.	 170 Salih OZCAN Borussia Dortmund (Ger) Age 26 (11.01.98) Montella is keen on the former Germany U21 international, who switched allegiance to Turkey in 2022. His experience, strong tackling and defensive cover will be required.
 141 Ismail YUKSEK Fenerbahce Age 25 (26.01.99) Defensive midfield dynamo, whose work-rate and passing range make him a key player. Vying with Ozcan for the anchorman role, though both can play together.	FORWARDS		 92 Yunus AKGUN Leicester City (Eng) Age 23 (07.07.00) Hard-working, pacy right-winger. A Montella favourite since their time at Adana Demirspor, but others are pushing hard for inclusion – especially Kilicsoy, Aydin and Sari.	 285 Kerem AKTURKOGLU Galatasaray Age 25 (21.10.98) Energetic attacker, who can play out wide or as a No.10, and an ever-present under Montella so far. Impressed in the Champions League, but has a tendency to be profligate.	 131 Baris ALPER YILMAZ Galatasaray Age 24 (23.05.00) Broke into the team on merit after impressing in the Super Lig and Champions League. Right-winger with explosive pace, power, skill and work-rate. Can also play at right-back or up front.	 333 Enes UNAL Bournemouth (Eng) Age 27 (10.05.97) One of the most experienced strikers in the national team, but was unable to replicate his Getafe form for Turkey and not getting many minutes in the Premier League.	 5116 Cengiz UNDER Fenerbahce Age 26 (14.07.97) Skilful, quick winger who likes to dribble past defenders and has a dangerous long shot. Back to his best after a resurgent season at Fenerbahce.
 10 Can UZUN Nuremberg (Ger) Age 18 (11.11.05) Exciting German-born youngster known for his goalscoring prowess. A rising star in Germany's second tier, capable of leading the line or playing as an attacking midfielder.			 51 Kenan YILDIZ Juventus (Ita) Age 19 (04.05.05) Boy wonder who has had a meteoric rise at Juve and scored versus Germany on his full debut. Powerful forward willing to take on defenders and shoot for goal. One to watch.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Dogan ALEMDAR (Troyes, Fra), Okan KOCUK (Samsunspor), Muhammed SENGEZER (Istanbul Basaksehir) DEFENDERS Samet AKAYDIN (Panathinaikos, Gre), Kaan AYHAN (Galatasaray), Eren ELMALI (Trabzonspor), Ahmetcan KAPLAN (Ajax, Ned), Serdar SAATCI (Braga, Por), Ravil TAGIR (Westerlo, Bel) MIDFIELDERS Emre AKBABA (Adana Demirspor), Berkan KUTLU (Galatasaray), Abdulkadir OMUR (Hull City, Eng), Berat OZDEMIR (Trabzonspor) FORWARDS Oguz AYDIN (Alanyaspor), Enis DESTAN (Trabzonspor), Semih KILICSOY (Besiktas), Umut NAYIR (Pendikspor), Yusuf SARI (Adana Demirspor), Cenk TOSUN (Besiktas), Bertug YILDIRIM (Rennes, Fra)			

Still standing strong

Ukraine refuses to surrender – on and off the pitch

Ukraine have qualified for their fourth European Championship in a row, but this time the feat is particularly remarkable as it was achieved after more than two years of enduring a full-scale war unleashed by Russia.

The path to Euro 2024 was strewn with obstacles. The team began qualifying with confusion after the contract of ex-coach Oleksandr Petrakov was not renewed. Under the guidance of Under-21 boss Ruslan Rotan, Ukraine lost their first qualifier away to England.

Despite this, the question of who would lead the team was never in doubt. The Ukrainian Football Association (UAF) was simply waiting for Serhiy Rebrov to sign a three-year deal after completing his work with Emirati club Al Ain.

Ukraine's chances of qualifying directly for Euro 2024 always looked slim after being paired with England and Italy; predictably, they finished third in the group – albeit only just behind the Italians on goal difference. As a result, Ukraine had to fight for Euro qualification through the play-offs via their Nations League placing.

There, not without luck, they defeated Bosnia & Herzegovina in the semi-finals and Iceland in the decisive match, both by 2-1 scorelines. Ukraine came from behind and scored winning goals at the very end of both matches.

Ukraine stalwart Oleksandr Zinchenko

"We knew that soldiers from the frontline were watching us. They sent us a lot of messages. This gave us enormous additional motivation"

Oleksandr Zinchenko

revealed the reason behind them never giving up: "We knew that soldiers from the frontline were watching us. They sent us a lot of messages. This gave us enormous additional motivation."

"I am sure that qualifying for Euro 2024 is a very important success for the entire Ukrainian nation, who continue to suffer from the horrors of war," added Rebrov. "We dedicate it to the heroic Ukrainian armed forces who are now defending the independence of our country."

In qualifying, the average age of Ukraine's starting XI was just 25 years and 272 days – only Bulgaria's team

**Crowd support...
Ukraine fans hold
up flags in support
of their nation**



was younger – so they will likely have the youngest side at the finals. Overall, though, the current squad looks quite balanced. Veterans such as Taras Stepanenko and Andriy Yarmolenko will retain their places, while youngsters like Illia Zabarnyi, Heorhiy Sudakov and Mykhailo Mudryk will strengthen their positions in leading roles. And among the performers in their prime are Mykola Matviyenko, Artem Dovbyk, Viktor Tsyhankov and Zinchenko.

Taking into account the potential of these players, Ukraine will fancy their chances of progressing from Group E, which includes Slovakia, Romania and Belgium. UAF president Andriy Shevchenko, who managed the team at Euro 2020, is confident: "The current national team has a very strong character. Even when losing, the players do not give up, do not break, but fight for victory to the end. This gives us reason to believe that they will prove themselves in the same way at the upcoming Euros in Germany."

Oleg Zadernovsky

SERHIY REBROV



Last year you returned to Ukraine when there was a war going on in the country. How did you make this decision?

I didn't hesitate for a minute when I signed the contract with the UAF. Indeed, it was very important for me to be with the Ukrainians, with my people. It is an honour and responsibility to coach the Ukrainian national team during perhaps the most difficult period in the history of our country.

Ukraine have been forced to play outside the country for a very long time now.

How difficult has that been for the team?

Yes, we cannot play in Ukraine, but we feel the support of Ukrainians wherever we play, be it in the Czech Republic or Poland. A lot of Ukrainians were forced to seek refuge in many European countries and, when they come to our matches, they again feel connected to their homeland.

How difficult, and how big an achievement, was it to qualify for this summer's European Championship?

This qualifying campaign was very difficult, but at the same time quite positive as it led us to Euro 2024. Each player had great motivation. This became a key factor.





Crucial goal...
Mykhailo Mudryk
celebrates scoring
against Iceland
in the play-offs

We have individually strong players such as Zinchenko, Mudryk, Tsyhankov and others, but the main thing is teamwork.

Can you tell us a little bit about your approach to coaching?

Everything is built on respect and trust. I always tell the players: "I respect your work, you respect mine". These are the basics. It can happen that a player forgets the coaching instructions during a match, but you have the opportunity to give him advice and thus improve the game of the entire team.

What do you think distinguishes

the current Ukraine team from the one that represented the country at the last European Championship in 2021?

There is a significant difference.

It mainly lies in the fact that half of the players in the current team now perform in the top leagues in Europe. Of course, Ukraine can only benefit from this.

How did the team celebrate qualifying for Euro 2024?

Of course, there

Patriot...Rebrov stands for Ukraine's national anthem



were pleasant emotions in the dressing room immediately after the match with Iceland. But overall, it was impossible to fully concentrate on the celebration.

There is a war in our country and people die every day – from our soldiers to civilians in their homes. But Ukraine is a strong nation and we want to prove it once again, this time during the Euros in Germany.

Oleg Zadernovsky

TACTICS

Not spectacular, but effective

Rebrov primarily uses a 4-1-4-1, but this can transform into an attacking 3-5-2. The style of play is not spectacular, but pragmatic – in the play-offs, for example, all four goals came from counter-attacks.

In goal, Andriy Lunin and Anatoliy Trubin are competing on equal terms but defence will be an area of concern; under Rebrov, Ukraine have only kept three clean sheets in ten matches. This is surprising because individually centre-backs Illia Zabarnyi and Mykola Matviyenko and full-backs Vitaliy Mykolenko and Yuhym Konoplya are all high-quality players.

Taras Stepanenko plays deep, starting the transition from defence to attack, but he missed the play-offs with Volodymyr Brazhko stepping in. The wingers like to put pressure on the opposition defence; Mykhailo Mudryk is very quick and readily bursts into open areas of space, while Viktor Tsyhankov has excellent vision and packs a dangerous long-range shot. Centrally, Oleksandr Zinchenko dictates movement in the midfield, while Heorhiy Sudakov is the main distributor of short and medium passes.

Striker Artem Dovbyk is a big presence up front, but he needs significant support otherwise he can end up a little isolated.



Lightning quick left-winger...
Mykhailo Mudryk



Team orchestrator...
Oleksandr Zinchenko

SCHEDULE

FRIENDLIES

Jun 3 v **Germany**
(a, Nuremberg)
Jun 7 v **Poland**
(a, Warsaw)
Jun 11 v **Moldova**
(a, Chisinau)

GROUP GAMES

Jun 17
v **Romania**
(Munich)
Jun 21
v **Slovakia**
(Dusseldorf)
Jun 26
v **Belgium**
(Stuttgart)

KITS



THE VIEW FROM UKRAINE



"The strength of the current Ukraine team is that almost 80 per cent of the players were at the last Euros. Having reached Euro 2024 during the war, the players have already become moral winners in the eyes of Ukrainians. The team could become a dark horse at Euro 2024."

*Vyacheslav Grozny,
Ukrainian TV football expert*



"The team has a good mixture of young and experienced players with Zabarnyi, Mudryk and Sudakov determining the structure of the game. In Group E, Belgium look like favourites, but in the battle for second place Ukraine may finish ahead of Slovakia and Romania."

Jozsef Szabo, ex-Ukraine head coach

COACH

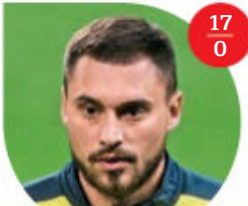
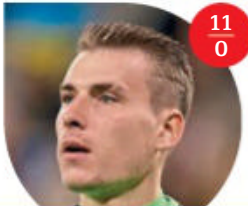
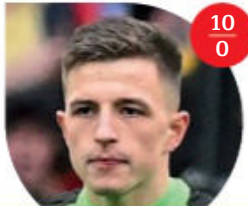
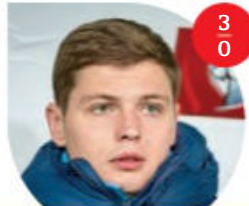
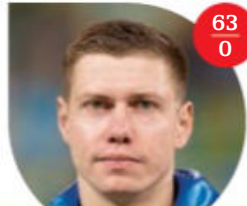
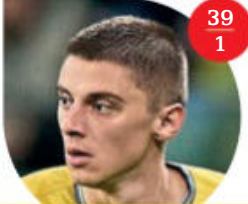
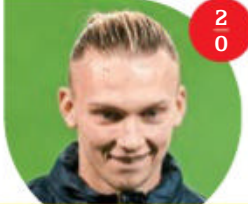
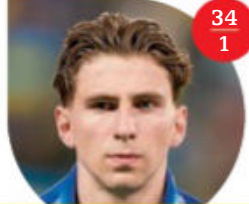
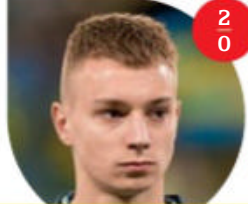
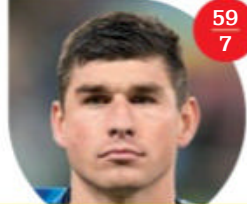
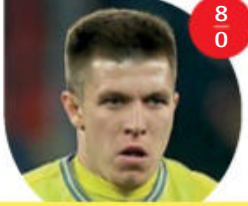
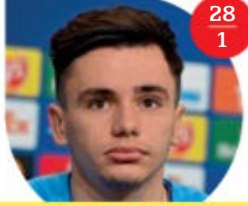
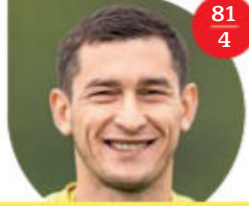
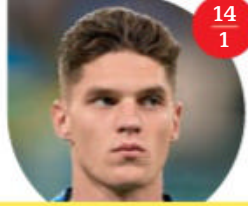
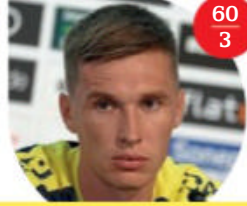
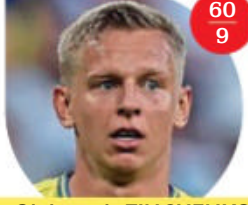
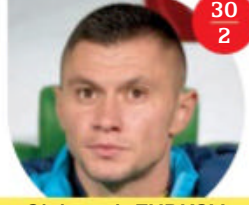
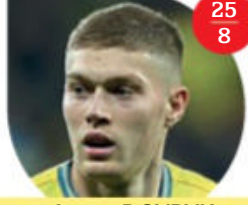
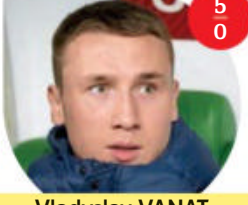
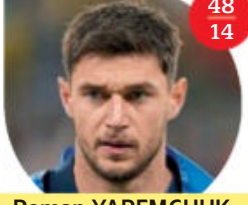


Serhiy REBROV
Age 49 (03.06.74)
Appointed June 2023

Rebrov received his football education at the Shakhtar Donetsk academy, before making a name for himself at Dynamo Kyiv where he formed a famed strike partnership with Andriy Shevchenko. He began his coaching career in 2009 with Dynamo's Under-21s, and considers club legend Valeriy Lobanovskiy as his mentor. He won the Ukrainian Premier League twice with Dynamo, the Hungarian title three times with Ferencvaros and the UAE Pro League with Al Ain, before taking charge of his country and leading them to a major tournament at his first attempt.

THE SQUAD

● = caps, goals, clubs and ages (as of 31.05.24)

GOALKEEPERS	 Heorhiy BUSHCHAN Dynamo Kyiv Age 30 (31.05.94) Lost No.1 status during the 2022-23 Nations League after a knee injury. Returned for two games in qualifying, but is back behind Lunin and Trubin in the pecking order.	 Andriy LUNIN Real Madrid (Spa) Age 25 (11.02.99) Has taken his chance this season after several years in the Real Madrid reserves. Very calm, even phlegmatic, and reliable. Vying with Trubin for the gloves this summer.	 Anatoliy TRUBIN Benfica (Por) Age 22 (01.08.01) Has continued his progress at Benfica since leaving Shakhtar Donetsk last summer. Very tall and has outstanding reflexes. Started six times in Euro qualifying.	 Valeriy BONDAR Shakhtar Donetsk Age 25 (27.02.99) Captain of the team that won the U20 World Cup in 2019. Has matured into a reliable centre-back at Shakhtar, but a likely reserve in Germany. Strong in the air.	 Yukhym KONOPLYA Shakhtar Donetsk Age 24 (26.08.99) A quality right-back and another U20 world champion. Plenty of pace, with excellent timing when attacking. First choice after making nine appearances during the qualifiers.	 Mykola MATVIYENKO Shakhtar Donetsk Age 28 (02.05.96) Remains at Shakhtar despite interest from abroad. Confident when stepping out from defence and has excellent passing accuracy. Can also fill in at left-back if needed.
	 Vitaliy MYKOLENKO Everton (Eng) Age 25 (29.05.99) Hard-working left-back and a good performer for his club over the past few seasons. Always motivated, and strong and difficult to beat. Could be a doubt after an ankle injury.	 Maksym TALOVYEROV LASK (Aut) Age 23 (28.06.00) Effective stopper and a good prospect for the future. Made his debut as a substitute in the two play-off matches. A passionate fan of Virgil van Dijk's playing style.	 Oleksandr TYMCHYK Dynamo Kyiv Age 27 (20.01.97) Disciplined right-back. Unused member of Andriy Shevchenko's Euro 2020 squad. Times his runs forward well and has an accurate cross from the flank. Konoplya's deputy.	 Illia ZABARNYI Bournemouth (Eng) Age 21 (01.09.02) A young and promising central defender. He has matured significantly after moving from Dynamo Kyiv to Bournemouth in January 2023. A good reader of the game.	 Volodymyr BRAZHKO Dynamo Kyiv Age 22 (23.01.02) Good tackler and ball winner. A young, hard and uncompromising player who could have a key role in Ukraine's midfield of the future. Won his first caps in the play-offs.	 Ruslan MALINOVSKYI Genoa (Ita) Age 31 (04.05.93) A former midfield commander, but no longer first choice for club or country. Shone for three seasons at Atalanta and now back in Italy after failing at Marseille.
	 Mykhailo MUDRYK Chelsea (Eng) Age 23 (05.01.01) A great talent from whom something special is always expected, but sometimes his feet are ahead of his brain. Scored the winner against Iceland that sealed qualification.	 Oleksandr PIKHLYONOK Dnipro-1 Age 27 (07.05.97) An inventive midfielder with excellent distribution skills. Considered one of the best creative midfielders in the domestic league. Made two substitute appearances in qualifying.	 Mykola SHAPARENKO Dynamo Kyiv Age 25 (04.10.98) Very talented playmaker who missed almost the whole of the 2022-23 season with a torn ACL. Returned for the play-offs, but has struggled to reach his previous high levels.	 Taras STEPANENKO Shakhtar Donetsk Age 34 (08.08.89) An experienced holding midfielder. Loves to tackle and has plenty of fighting spirit but, with age, he has become more injury prone. Played at the previous two Euros.	 Heorhiy SUDAKOV Shakhtar Donetsk Age 21 (01.09.02) The brightest young talent still playing in Ukraine, but big European clubs have reportedly set their sights on him. Thinks one step ahead of his opponent on the pitch.	 Serhiy SYDORCHUK Westerlo (Bel) Age 33 (02.05.91) Experienced, hard-working defensive midfielder. Made a name for himself at Dynamo Kyiv before moving to modest Belgian outfit Westerlo last year.
	 Viktor TSYHANKOV Girona (Spa) Age 26 (15.11.97) Speed in decision-making and the ability to both start an attack and finish it are his best qualities. A good performer in Spain for surprise packages Girona since joining from Dynamo Kyiv in 2023.	 Andriy YARMOLENKO Dynamo Kyiv Age 34 (23.10.89) Vastly experienced and prolific winger, formerly of West Ham and Dortmund, who has played at the last three Euros. Captain and undisputed leader of the team on and off the pitch.	 Oleksandr ZINCHENKO Arsenal (Eng) Age 27 (15.12.96) Versatile, technical player who performs well both in central midfield or at left-back, but better at organising attacks than defending. A member of the UAF executive committee.	 Oleksandr ZUBKOV Shakhtar Donetsk Age 27 (03.08.96) Aggressive right-winger who has improved a lot since returning to Shakhtar in 2022 from Hungarian giants Ferencvaros. Never hesitates to shoot for goal from any distance out.	 Artem DOVBYK Girona (Spa) Age 26 (21.06.97) Powerful centre-forward whose winning goal v Sweden took Ukraine to the quarter-finals at Euro 2020. In the race for La Liga's Golden Boot in his first season in Spain.	 Danylo SIKAN Shakhtar Donetsk Age 23 (16.04.01) Another of the U20 world champions, scoring four goals to win the Silver Boot behind Norway's Erling Haaland. Shakhtar's top scorer in this season's Champions League.
	 Vladyslav VANAT Dynamo Kyiv Age 22 (04.01.02) Dynamo Kyiv youth product. The hit of this season's Ukrainian Premier League and leading the race to be top goalscorer. Dangerous in front of goal and skilful on the ball.	 Roman YAREMCHUK Valencia (Spa) Age 28 (27.11.95) Experienced forward capable of raising his game for his country on the big occasion. Struggling for form at Valencia this season, where he is on loan from Club Brugge.	ALSO IN CONTENTION GOALKEEPERS Dmytro RIZNYK (Shakhtar Donetsk), Mykyta SHEVCHENKO (Oleksandriya) DEFENDERS Vladyslav DUBINCHAK (Dynamo Kyiv), Oleksandr KARAVAYEV (Dynamo Kyiv), Serhiy KRYVTSOV (Inter Miami, USA), Bohdan MYKHAYLICHENKO (Polissya), Denys POPOV (Dynamo Kyiv), Eduard SOBOL (Genk, Bel), Oleksandr SVATOK (Dnipro-1) MIDFIELDERS Vitaliy BUYALSKYI (Dynamo Kyiv), Oleksiy HUTSULYAK (Dnipro-1), Danylo IHNATENKO (Bordeaux, Fra), Vladyslav KOCHERHIN (Rakow Czestochowa, Pol), Viktor KOVALENKO (Empoli, Ita), Yehor NAZARYNA (Shakhtar Donetsk) FORWARDS Nazariy RUSYN (Sunderland, Eng)			

ALBANIA

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Albania	8	4	3	1	12	4	+8	15
2 Czech Republic	8	4	3	1	12	6	+6	15
3 Poland	8	3	2	3	10	10	0	11
4 Moldova	8	2	4	2	7	10	-3	10
5 Faroe Islands	8	0	2	6	2	13	-11	2

27.03.23	Poland	1	0	Albania
17.06.23	Albania	2	0	Moldova
20.06.23	Faroe Islands	1	3	Albania
07.09.23	Czech Republic	1	1	Albania
10.09.23	Albania	2	0	Poland
12.10.23	Albania	3	0	Czech Republic
17.11.23	Moldova	1	1	Albania
20.11.23	Albania	0	0	Faroe Islands

AUSTRIA

GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Belgium	8	6	2	0	22	4	+18	20
2 Austria	8	6	1	1	17	7	+10	19
3 Sweden	8	3	1	4	14	12	+2	10
4 Azerbaijan	8	2	1	5	7	17	-10	7
5 Estonia	8	0	1	7	2	22	-20	1

24.03.23	Austria	4	1	Azerbaijan
27.03.23	Austria	2	1	Estonia
17.06.23	Belgium	1	1	Austria
20.06.23	Austria	2	0	Sweden
12.09.23	Sweden	1	3	Austria
13.10.23	Austria	2	3	Belgium
16.10.23	Azerbaijan	0	1	Austria
16.11.23	Estonia	0	2	Austria



Knee injury...Austria captain David Alaba is a major doubt for the tournament

BELGIUM

GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Belgium	8	6	2	0	22	4	+18	20
2 Austria	8	6	1	1	17	7	+10	19
3 Sweden	8	3	1	4	14	12	+2	10
4 Azerbaijan	8	2	1	5	7	17	-10	7
5 Estonia	8	0	1	7	2	22	-20	1

24.03.23	Sweden	0	3	Belgium
17.06.23	Belgium	1	1	Austria
20.06.23	Estonia	0	3	Belgium
09.09.23	Azerbaijan	0	1	Belgium
12.09.23	Belgium	5	0	Estonia
13.10.23	Austria	2	3	Belgium
16.10.23	Belgium	1	1	Sweden
19.11.23	Belgium	5	0	Azerbaijan



Top scorer... Romelu Lukaku notched 14 goals in qualifying for Belgium

CROATIA

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Turkey	8	5	2	1	14	7	+7	17
2 Croatia	8	5	1	2	13	4	+9	16
3 Wales	8	3	3	2	10	10	0	12
4 Armenia	8	2	2	4	9	11	-2	8
5 Latvia	8	1	0	7	5	19	-14	3

25.03.23	Croatia	1	1	Wales
28.03.23	Turkey	0	2	Croatia
08.09.23	Croatia	5	0	Latvia
11.09.23	Armenia	0	1	Croatia
12.10.23	Croatia	0	1	Turkey
15.10.23	Wales	2	1	Croatia
18.11.23	Latvia	0	2	Croatia
21.11.23	Croatia	1	0	Armenia

CZECH REPUBLIC

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Albania	8	4	3	1	12	4	+8	15
2 Czech Republic	8	4	3	1	12	6	+6	15
3 Poland	8	3	2	3	10	10	0	11
4 Moldova	8	2	4	2	7	10	-3	10
5 Faroe Islands	8	0	2	6	2	13	-11	2

24.03.23	Czech Republic	3	1	Poland
27.03.23	Moldova	0	0	Czech Republic
17.06.23	Faroe Islands	0	3	Czech Republic
07.09.23	Czech Republic	1	1	Albania
12.10.23	Albania	3	0	Czech Republic
15.10.23	Czech Republic	1	0	Faroe Islands
17.11.23	Poland	1	1	Czech Republic
20.11.23	Czech Republic	3	0	Moldova

DENMARK

GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Denmark	10	7	1	2	19	10	+9	22
2 Slovenia	10	7	1	2	20	9	+11	22
3 Finland	10	6	0	4	18	10	+8	18
4 Kazakhstan	10	6	0	4	16	12	+4	18
5 Northern Ireland	10	3	0	7	9	13	-4	9
6 San Marino	10	0	0	10	3	31	-28	0

23.03.23	Denmark	3	1	Finland
26.03.23	Kazakhstan	3	2	Denmark
16.06.23	Denmark	1	0	Northern Ireland
19.06.23	Slovenia	1	1	Denmark
07.09.23	Denmark	4	0	San Marino
10.09.23	Finland	0	1	Denmark
14.10.23	Denmark	3	1	Kazakhstan
17.10.23	San Marino	1	2	Denmark
17.11.23	Denmark	2	1	Slovenia
20.11.23	Northern Ireland	2	0	Denmark

ENGLAND

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 England	8	6	2	0	22	4	+18	20
2 Italy	8	4	2	2	16	9	+7	14
3 Ukraine	8	4	2	2	11	8	+3	14
4 North Macedonia	8	2	2	4	10	20	-10	8
5 Malta	8	0	0	8	2	20	-18	0

23.03.23	Italy	1	2	England
26.03.23	England	2	0	Ukraine
16.06.23	Malta	0	4	England
19.06.23	England	7	0	North Macedonia
09.09.23	Ukraine	1	1	England
17.10.23	England	3	1	Italy
17.11.23	England	2	0	Malta
20.11.23	North Macedonia	1	1	England

FRANCE

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 France	8	7	1	0	29	3	+26	22
2 Netherlands	8	6	0	2	17	7	+10	18
3 Greece	8	4	1	3	14	8	+6	13
4 Republic of Ireland	8	2	0	6	9	10	-1	6
5 Gibraltar	8	0	0	8	0	41	-41	0

24.03.23	France	4	0	Netherlands
27.03.23	Republic of Ireland	0	1	France
16.06.23	Gibraltar	0	3	France
19.06.23	France	1	0	Greece
07.09.23	France	2	0	Republic of Ireland
13.10.23	Netherlands	1	2	France
18.11.23	France	14	0	Gibraltar
21.11.23	Greece	2	2	France



Talisman...Mbappe will captain France in Germany this summer

GEORGIA

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Spain	8	7	0	1	25	5	+20	21
2 Scotland	8	5	2	1	17	8	+9	17
3 Norway	8	3	2	3	14	12	+2	11
4 Georgia	8	2	2	4	12	18	-6	8
5 Cyprus	8	0	0	8	3	28	-25	0

28.03.23	Georgia	1	1	Norway
17.06.23	Cyprus	1	2	Georgia
20.06.23	Scotland	2	0	Georgia
08.09.23	Georgia	1	7	Spain
12.09.23	Norway	2	1	Georgia
15.10.23	Georgia	4	0	Cyprus
16.11.23	Georgia	2	2	Scotland
19.11.23	Spain	3	1	Georgia

(Reached the play-offs via the 2022-23 Nations League)

PLAY-OFFS PATH C

21.03.24	Georgia	2	0	Luxembourg
26.03.24	Georgia	0	0	Greece

After Extra-Time Georgia won 4-2 on penalties

GERMANY

Qualified as hosts

HUNGARY

GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Hungary	8	5	3	0	16	7	+9	18
2 Serbia	8	4	2	2	15	9	+6	14
3 Montenegro	8	3	2	3	9	11	-2	11
4 Lithuania	8	1	3	4	8	14	-6	6
5 Bulgaria	8	0	4	4	7	14	-7	4

27.03.23	Hungary	3	0	Bulgaria
17.06.23	Montenegro	0	0	Hungary
20.06.23	Hungary	2	0	Lithuania
07.09.23	Serbia	1	2	Hungary
14.10.23	Hungary	2	1	Serbia
17.10.23	Lithuania	2	2	Hungary
16.11.23	Bulgaria	2	2	Hungary
19.11.23	Hungary	3	1	Montenegro

ITALY

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 England	8	6	2	0	22	4	+18	20
2 Italy	8	4	2	2	16	9	+7	14
3 Ukraine	8	4	2	2	11	8	+3	14
4 North Macedonia	8	2	2	4	10	20	-10	8
5 Malta	8	0	0	8	2	20	-18	0

23.03.23	Italy	1	2	England
26.03.23	Malta	0	2	Italy
09.09.23	North Macedonia	1	1	Italy
12.09.23	Italy	2	1	Ukraine
14.10.23	Italy	4	0	Malta
17.10.23	England	3	1	Italy
17.11.23	Italy	5	2	North Macedonia
20.11.23	Ukraine	0	0	Italy

NETHERLANDS

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 France	8	7	1	0	29	3	+26	22
2 Netherlands	8	6	0	2	17	7	+10	18
3 Greece	8	4	1	3	14	8	+6	13
4 Republic of Ireland	8	2	0	6	9	10	-1	6
5 Gibraltar	8	0	0	8	0	41	-41	0

24.03.23	France	4	0	Netherlands
27.03.23	Netherlands	3	0	Gibraltar
07.09.23	Netherlands	3	0	Greece
10.09.23	Republic of Ireland	1	2	Netherlands
13.10.23	Netherlands	1	2	France
16.10.23	Greece	0	1	Netherlands
18.11.23	Netherlands	1	0	Republic of Ireland
21.11.23	Gibraltar	0	6	Netherlands

POLAND

GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Albania	8	4	3	1	12	4	+8	15
2 Czech Republic	8	4	3	1	12	6	+6	15
3 Poland	8	3	2	3	10	10	0	11
4 Moldova	8	2	4	2	7	10	-3	10
5 Faroe Islands	8	0	2	6	2	13	-11	2

24.03.23	Czech Republic	3	1	Poland
27.03.23	Poland	1	0	Albania
20.06.23	Moldova	3	2	Poland
07.09.23	Poland	2	0	Faroe Islands
10.09.23	Albania	2	0	Poland
12.10.23	Faroe Islands	0	2	Poland
15.10.23	Poland	1	1	Moldova
17.11.23	Poland	1	1	Czech Republic

(Reached the play-offs via the 2022-23 Nations League)

PLAY-OFFS PATH A

21.03.24	Poland	5	1	Estonia
26.03.24	Wales	0	0	Poland

After Extra-Time Poland won 5-4 on penalties



Last dance...
Euro 2024
could be
Cristiano
Ronaldo's
final major
tournament

PORTUGAL

GROUP J	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Portugal	10	10	0	0	36	2	+34	30
2 Slovakia	10	7	1	2	17	8	+9	22
3 Luxembourg	10	5	2	3	13	19	-6	17
4 Iceland	10	3	1	6	17	16	+1	10
5 Bosnia & Herzegovina	10	3	0	7	9	20	-11	9
6 Liechtenstein	10	0	0	10	1	28	-27	0

23.03.23	Portugal	4	0	Liechtenstein
26.03.23	Luxembourg	0	6	Portugal
17.06.23	Portugal	3	0	Bosnia & Herz.
20.06.23	Iceland	0	1	Portugal
08.09.23	Slovakia	0	1	Portugal
11.09.23	Portugal	9	0	Luxembourg
13.10.23	Portugal	3	2	Slovakia
16.10.23	Bosnia & Herz.	0	5	Portugal
16.11.23	Liechtenstein	0	2	Portugal
19.11.23	Portugal	2	0	Iceland

ROMANIA

GROUP I	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Romania	10	6	4	0	16	5	+11	22
2 Switzerland	10	4	5	1	22	11	+11	17
3 Israel	10	4	3	3	11	11	0	15
4 Belarus	10	3	3	4	9	14	-5	12
5 Kosovo	10	2	5	3	10	10	0	11
6 Andorra	10	0	2	8	3	20	-17	2

25.03.23	Andorra	0	2	Romania
28.03.23	Romania	2	1	Belarus
16.06.23	Kosovo	0	0	Romania
19.06.23	Switzerland	2	2	Romania
09.09.23	Romania	1	1	Israel
12.09.23	Romania	2	0	Kosovo
12.10.23	Belarus	0	0	Romania
15.10.23	Romania	4	0	Andorra
18.11.23	Israel	1	2	Romania
21.11.23	Romania	1	0	Switzerland

SCOTLAND

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Spain	8	7	0	1	25	5	+20	21
2 Scotland	8	5	2	1	17	8	+9	17
3 Norway	8	3	2	3	14	12	+2	11
4 Georgia	8	2	2	4	12	18	-6	8
5 Cyprus	8	0	0	8	3	28	-25	0

25.03.23	Scotland	3	0	Cyprus
28.03.23	Scotland	2	0	Spain
17.06.23	Norway	1	2	Scotland
20.06.23	Scotland	2	0	Georgia
08.09.23	Cyprus	0	3	Scotland
12.10.23	Spain	2	0	Scotland
16.11.23	Georgia	2	2	Scotland
19.11.23	Scotland	3	3	Norway



Goal machine...Scott
McTominay scored
seven qualifying
goals for Scotland

SERBIA

GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Hungary	8	5	3	0	16	7	+9	18
2 Serbia	8	4	2	2	15	9	+6	14
3 Montenegro	8	3	2	3	9	11	-2	11
4 Lithuania	8	1	3	4	8	14	-6	6
5 Bulgaria	8	0	4	4	7	14	-7	4

24.03.23	Serbia	2	0	Lithuania
27.03.23	Montenegro	0	2	Serbia
20.06.23	Bulgaria	1	1	Serbia
07.09.23	Serbia	1	2	Hungary
10.09.23	Lithuania	1	3	Serbia
14.10.23	Hungary	2	1	Serbia
17.10.23	Serbia	3	1	Montenegro
19.11.23	Serbia	2	2	Bulgaria



Record scorer
...Aleksandar
Mitrovic holds
Serbia's goal
record

SLOVAKIA

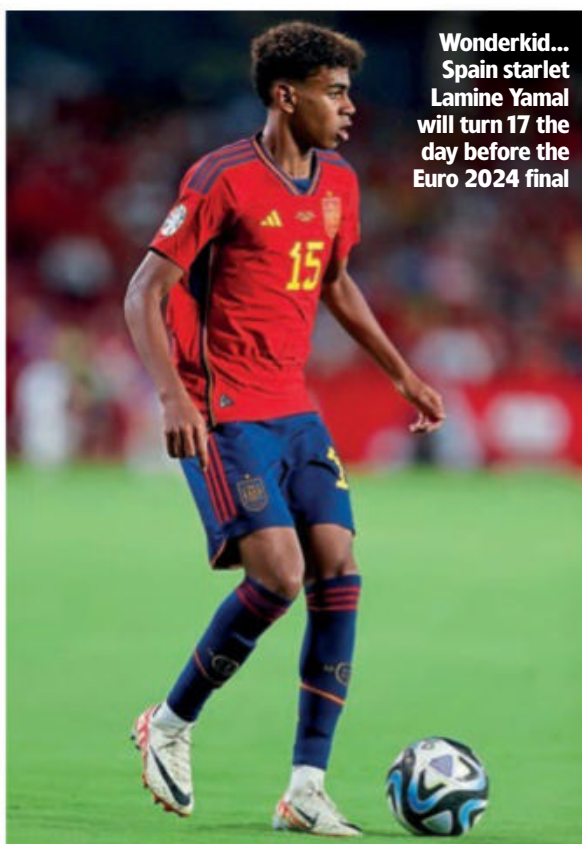
GROUP J	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Portugal	10	10	0	0	36	2	+34	30
2 Slovakia	10	7	1	2	17	8	+9	22
3 Luxembourg	10	5	2	3	13	19	-6	17
4 Iceland	10	3	1	6	17	16	+1	10
5 Bosnia & Herzegovina	10	3	0	7	9	20	-11	9
6 Liechtenstein	10	0	0	10	1	28	-27	0

23.03.23	Slovakia	0	0	Luxembourg
26.03.23	Slovakia	2	0	Bosnia & Herz.
17.06.23	Iceland	1	2	Slovakia
20.06.23	Liechtenstein	0	1	Slovakia
08.09.23	Slovakia	0	1	Portugal
11.09.23	Slovakia	3	0	Liechtenstein
13.10.23	Portugal	3	2	Slovakia
16.10.23	Luxembourg	0	1	Slovakia
16.11.23	Slovakia	4	2	Iceland
19.11.23	Bosnia & Herz.	1	2	Slovakia

SLOVENIA

GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Denmark	10	7	1	2	19	10	+9	22
2 Slovenia	10	7	1	2	20	9	+11	22
3 Finland	10	6	0	4	18	10	+8	18
4 Kazakhstan	10	6	0	4	16	12	+4	18
5 Northern Ireland	10	3	0	7	9	13	-4	9
6 San Marino	10	0	0	10	3	31	-28	0

23.03.23	Kazakhstan	1	2	Slovenia
26.03.23	Slovenia	2	0	San Marino
16.06.23	Finland	2	0	Slovenia
19.06.23	Slovenia	1	1	Denmark
07.09.23	Slovenia	4	2	Northern Ireland
10.09.23	San Marino	0	4	Slovenia
14.10.23	Slovenia	3	0	Finland
17.10.23	Northern Ireland	0	1	Slovenia
17.11.23	Denmark	2	1	Slovenia
20.11.23	Slovenia	2	1	Kazakhstan



Wonderkid...
Spain starlet
Lamine Yamal
will turn 17 the
day before the
Euro 2024 final

SPAIN

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Spain	8	7	0	1	25	5	+20	21
2 Scotland	8	5	2	1	17	8	+9	17
3 Norway	8	3	2	3	14	12	+2	11
4 Georgia	8	2	2	4	12	18	-6	8
5 Cyprus	8	0	0	8	3	28	-25	0

25.03.23	Spain	3	0	Norway
28.03.23	Scotland	2	0	Spain
08.09.23	Georgia	1	7	Spain
12.09.23	Spain	6	0	Cyprus
12.10.23	Spain	2	0	Scotland
15.10.23	Norway	0	1	Spain
16.11.23	Cyprus	1	3	Spain
19.11.23	Spain	3	1	Georgia

SWITZERLAND

GROUP I	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Romania	10	6	4	0	16	5	+11	22
2 Switzerland	10	4	5	1	22	11	+11	17
3 Israel	10	4	3	3	11	11	0	15
4 Belarus	10	3	3	4	9	14	-5	12
5 Kosovo	10	2	5	3	10	10	0	11
6 Andorra	10	0	2	8	3	20	-17	2



Emotional...Ukraine
have qualified for
their first major
tournament since
the invasion
by Russia

25.03.23	Belarus	0	5	Switzerland
28.03.23	Switzerland	3	0	Israel
16.06.23	Andorra	1	2	Switzerland
19.06.23	Switzerland	2	2	Romania
09.09.23	Kosovo	2	2	Switzerland
12.09.23	Switzerland	3	0	Andorra
15.10.23	Switzerland	3	3	Belarus
15.11.23	Israel	1	1	Switzerland
18.11.23	Switzerland	1	1	Kosovo
21.11.23	Romania	1	0	Switzerland

TURKEY

GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 Turkey	8	5	2	1	14	7	+7	17
2 Croatia	8	5	1	2	13	4	+9	16
3 Wales	8	3	3	2	10	10	0	12
4 Armenia	8	2	2	4	9	11	-2	8
5 Latvia	8	1	0	7	5	19	-14	3

25.03.23	Armenia	1	2	Turkey
28.03.23	Turkey	0	2	Croatia
16.06.23	Latvia	2	3	Turkey
19.06.23	Turkey	2	0	Wales
08.09.23	Turkey	1	1	Armenia
12.10.23	Croatia	0	1	Turkey
15.10.23	Turkey	4	0	Latvia
21.11.23	Wales	1	1	Turkey

UKRAINE

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
1 England	8	6	2	0	22	4	+18	20
2 Italy	8	4	2	2	16	9	+7	14
3 Ukraine	8	4	2	2	11	8	+3	14
4 North Macedonia	8	2	2	4	10	20	-10	8
5 Malta	8	0	0	8	2	20	-18	0

26.03.23	England	2	0	Ukraine
16.06.23	North Macedonia	2	3	Ukraine
19.06.23	Ukraine	1	0	Malta
09.09.23	Ukraine	1	1	England
12.09.23	Italy	2	1	Ukraine
14.10.23	Ukraine	2	0	North Macedonia
17.10.23	Malta	1	3	Ukraine
20.11.23	Ukraine	0	0	Italy

(Reached the play-offs via the 2022-23 Nations League)

PLAY-OFFS PATH B

21.03.24	Bosnia & Herz.	1	2	Ukraine
26.03.24	Ukraine	2	1	Iceland

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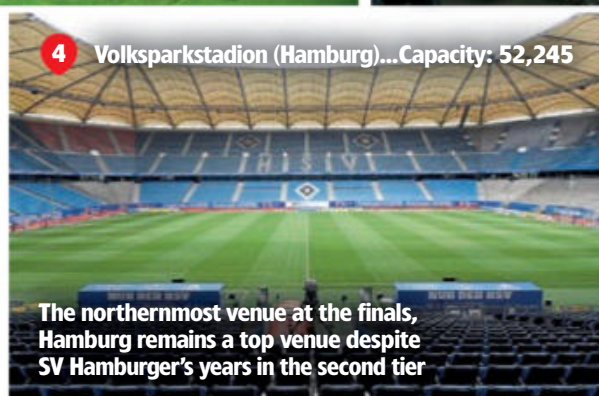
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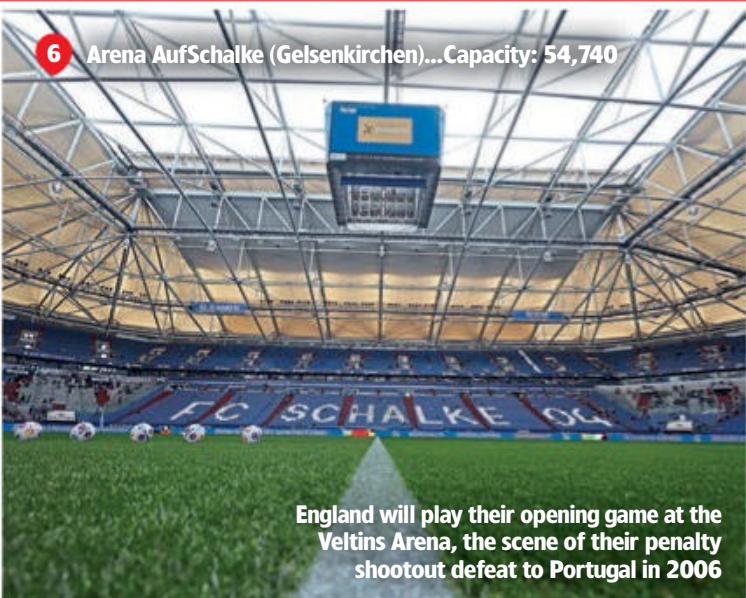
The Stadiums

Of the ten venues selected for Euro 2024, nine were used at the 2006 World Cup



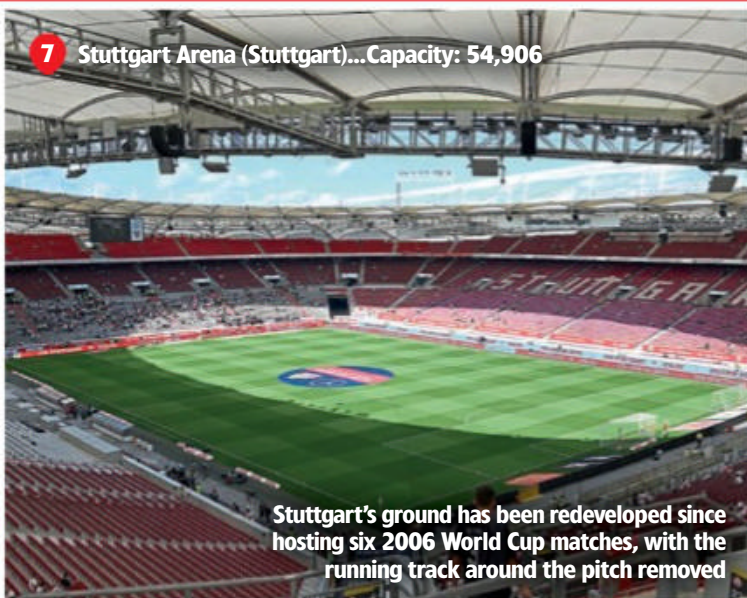
...AND WHERE THEY ARE





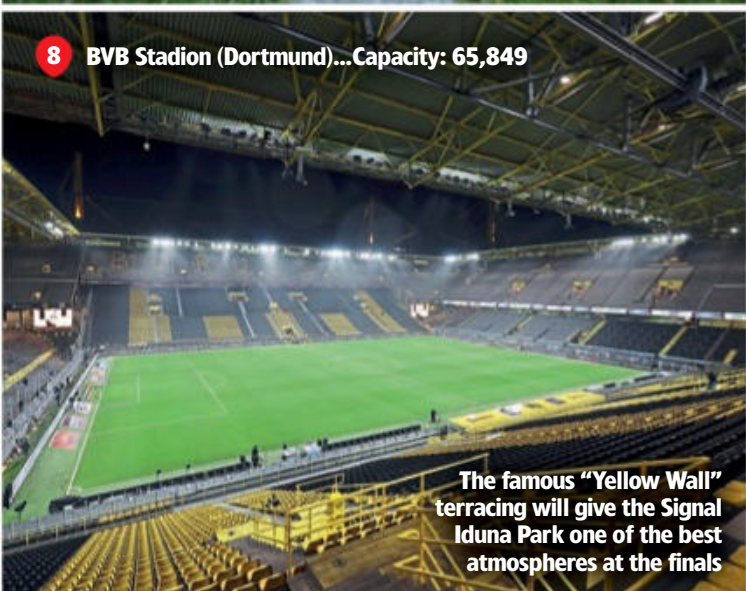
6 Arena AufSchalke (Gelsenkirchen)...Capacity: 54,740

England will play their opening game at the Veltins Arena, the scene of their penalty shootout defeat to Portugal in 2006



7 Stuttgart Arena (Stuttgart)...Capacity: 54,906

Stuttgart's ground has been redeveloped since hosting six 2006 World Cup matches, with the running track around the pitch removed



8 BVB Stadion (Dortmund)...Capacity: 65,849

The famous "Yellow Wall" terracing will give the Signal Iduna Park one of the best atmospheres at the finals



9 Fussball Arena (Munich)...Capacity: 70,076

Euro 2024 kicks off with hosts Germany against Scotland at Bayern Munich's iconic Allianz Arena



Olympiastadion (Berlin)...Capacity: 74,461 **10**

The host of the 2006 World Cup final retains top spot for 2024 despite getting overlooked for hosting duties at Euro 2020



Euro 2024 Special Vol. 64 No.10

GROUP EDITOR
Stephen Fishlock

MANAGING EDITOR
Jamie Evans

DIGITAL MANAGING EDITOR
Jared Tinslay

DESIGN
Sean Phillips, atg-media.com

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EDITORIAL
Kelsey Media, The Granary,
Downs Court, Yalding Hill,
Yalding, Maidstone,
Kent, ME18 6AL

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Talk Media Ltd: Russell Bedford
Tel. 01732 445328
Email: russell@talk-media.uk

AD PRODUCTION MANAGER
Talk Media Ltd: Nick Bond
Tel. 01732 445325
Email: nick@talk-media.uk

PUBLISHER Steve Brown
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER Phil Weeden
MANAGING DIRECTOR Kevin McCormick
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CONSUMER
ADVERTISING Oswin Grady
OPERATIONS DIRECTOR Gill Lambert
HEAD OF DIRECT CONSUMER REVENUE
Nicholas McIntosh
PRINT PRODUCTION MANAGER
Georgina Harris
PRINT PRODUCTION CONTROLLERS
Hayley Brown & Kelly Orriss

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CONTACT US

Editorial: wos.ed@kelsey.co.uk

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Kelsey Publishing Ltd, The Granary,
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Maidstone, Kent, ME18 6AL

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Euro 2024 Schedule

GROUP A

Germany ● Hungary ● Scotland ● Switzerland

June 14	Germany v Scotland	(8pm, Munich)
June 15	Hungary v Switzerland	(2pm, Cologne)
June 19	Germany v Hungary	(5pm, Stuttgart)
June 19	Scotland v Switzerland	(8pm, Cologne)
June 23	Switzerland v Germany	(8pm, Frankfurt)
June 23	Scotland v Hungary	(8pm, Stuttgart)

GROUP B

Spain ● Albania ● Croatia ● Italy

June 15	Spain v Croatia	(5pm, Berlin)
June 15	Italy v Albania	(8pm, Dortmund)
June 19	Croatia v Albania	(2pm, Hamburg)
June 20	Spain v Italy	(8pm, Gelsenkirchen)
June 24	Albania v Spain	(8pm, Dusseldorf)
June 24	Croatia v Italy	(8pm, Leipzig)

GROUP C

England ● Denmark ● Slovenia ● Serbia

June 16	Slovenia v Denmark	(5pm, Stuttgart)
June 16	Serbia v England	(8pm, Gelsenkirchen)
June 20	Slovenia v Serbia	(2pm, Munich)
June 20	Denmark v England	(5pm, Frankfurt)
June 25	England v Slovenia	(8pm, Cologne)
June 25	Denmark v Serbia	(8pm, Munich)

GROUP D

France ● Austria ● Netherlands ● Poland

June 16	Poland v Netherlands	(2pm, Hamburg)
June 17	Austria v France	(8pm, Dusseldorf)
June 21	Poland v Austria	(5pm, Berlin)
June 21	Netherlands v France	(8pm, Leipzig)
June 25	Netherlands v Austria	(5pm, Berlin)
June 25	France v Poland	(5pm, Dortmund)

GROUP E

Belgium ● Romania ● Slovakia ● Ukraine

June 17	Romania v Ukraine	(2pm, Munich)
June 17	Belgium v Slovakia	(5pm, Frankfurt)
June 21	Slovakia v Ukraine	(2pm, Dusseldorf)
June 22	Belgium v Romania	(8pm, Cologne)
June 26	Slovakia v Romania	(5pm, Frankfurt)
June 26	Ukraine v Belgium	(5pm, Stuttgart)

GROUP F

Portugal ● Turkey ● Czech Republic ● Georgia

June 18	Turkey v Georgia	(5pm, Dortmund)
June 18	Portugal v Czech Republic	(8pm, Leipzig)
June 22	Georgia v Czech Republic	(2pm, Hamburg)
June 22	Turkey v Portugal	(5pm, Dortmund)
June 26	Georgia v Portugal	(8pm, Gelsenkirchen)
June 26	Czech Republic v Turkey	(8pm, Hamburg)

ROUND OF 16

June 29	Runner-up A v Runner-up B	(5pm, Berlin)
June 29	Winner A v Runner-up C	(8pm, Dortmund)
June 30	Winner C v Third D/E/F	(5pm, Gelsenkirchen)
June 30	Winner B v Third A/D/E/F	(8pm, Cologne)
July 1	Runner-up D v Runner-up E	(5pm, Dusseldorf)
July 1	Winner F v Third A/B/C	(8pm, Frankfurt)
July 2	Winner E v Third A/B/C/D	(5pm, Munich)
July 2	Winner D v Runner-up F	(8pm, Leipzig)

QUARTER-FINALS

July 5	Winner Match 4 v Winner Match 2	(5pm, Stuttgart)
July 5	Winner Match 6 v Winner Match 5	(8pm, Hamburg)
July 6	Winner Match 3 v Winner Match 1	(5pm, Dusseldorf)
July 6	Winner Match 7 v Winner Match 8	(8pm, Berlin)

SEMI-FINALS

July 9	Winner QF1 v Winner QF2	(8pm, Munich)
July 10	Winner QF3 v Winner QF4	(8pm, Dortmund)

FINAL

July 14	Winner SF1 v Winner SF2	(8pm, Berlin)
---------	-------------------------	---------------



● all kick-off times are BST

Tim Sparv

Denmark 0 Finland 1

Euro 2020 group stage, June 2021, Copenhagen

Finland's first win at a major tournament was overshadowed by one of the most infamous moments in the history of the European Championship, as their captain recalls

“ This was the moment that Finnish football fans had been waiting for. It was a dream come true – the first time that the men's national team had played in a major tournament. The game was memorable for so many reasons.

I started representing Finland at Under-15 level, so it was a huge part of my identity. Captaining the senior side was a great honour and I thrived on the responsibility. Walking out at Parken, where I'd played many times with Midtjylland, and lining up alongside my team-mates was something to cherish.

This was the pinnacle of my career and the build-up was stressful. I was playing for a Greek club called AEL and everything was a mess. We'd just been relegated and I'd suffered a meniscus injury in March, so I didn't know if I'd recover in time.

Denmark had top-quality players and a passionate home crowd. We needed to be compact, particularly in the early stages, so we could settle down and grow into the game. We didn't concede, but we weren't satisfied with our performance. Pressure was building because we didn't show enough bravery or composure on the ball.

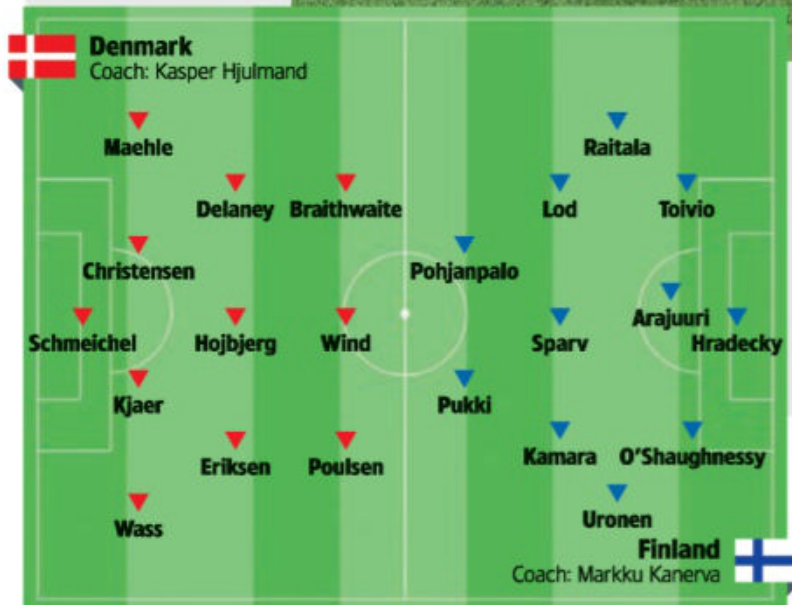
Just before half-time, Christian Eriksen collapsed. I was quite far away, so I didn't know what had happened. I assumed that he must have been fouled, but I could soon see from people's faces that it was something much worse.

Nobody was thinking about football anymore. We were all praying Christian would make a recovery, but we could tell this was serious. It was such an unusual situation that no one knew what to do. We lacked direction.

We stood on the pitch for a while and then went back to the dressing room, where we waited for a long time. Some people left the stadium because witnessing the incident was just too much for them.

I spoke to the referee and Kasper Schmeichel. We were told that the game would either be finished that same evening or the next day – two horrible choices. It seemed inhumane to play football after

Finland captain
...Sparv leads
his country at
their first major
tournament game



that, but we wanted to let Denmark decide what they felt was right.

I was surprised when I heard that we were going to carry on. You could see that the players weren't ready. A lot of them were upset and understandably distracted.

Denmark continued to dominate but we scored the only goal. We finally had some



Heartbreaking...
Denmark players
stand around
Christian Eriksen

possession and Jere Uronen put in a good cross from the left for Joel Pohjanpalo to head past Schmeichel. Even though the Finnish fans were gathered at that end, the celebrations were limited.

We were still under massive pressure and Denmark were awarded a penalty in the 74th minute. Lukas Hradecky is a great goalkeeper, but you expected them to equalise. Thankfully, he dived the right way and kept out Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg's attempt, which gave us a massive boost.

Despite securing such an important win, the atmosphere in the dressing room was very subdued as everyone tried to digest what the hell had happened.

"It seemed inhumane to play football after that, but we wanted to let Denmark decide what they felt was right"

Football can be so relentless that you don't really get time to reflect.

We were proud of the result but what happened to Christian put everything into perspective. He's such an inspiration. I just hope we can all learn from that day, so we're better prepared to deal with incidents like that in the future.

Interview by Sean Cole



GROUP A

FRIDAY 14 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ MUNICH

GERMANY SCOTLAND

SATURDAY 15 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ COLOGNE

HUNGARY SWITZERLAND

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ STUTTGART

GERMANY HUNGARY

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ COLOGNE

SCOTLAND SWITZERLAND

SUNDAY 23 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ FRANKFURT

SWITZERLAND GERMANY

SUNDAY 23 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ STUTTGART

SCOTLAND HUNGARY



FINAL GROUP A TABLE

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP B

SATURDAY 15 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ BERLIN

SPAIN CROATIA

SATURDAY 15 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ DORTMUND

ITALY ALBANIA

WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ HAMBURG

CROATIA ALBANIA

THURSDAY 20 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ GELSENKIRCHEN

SPAIN ITALY

MONDAY 24 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ DUSSELDORF

ALBANIA SPAIN

MONDAY 24 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ LEIPZIG

CROATIA ITALY



FINAL GROUP B TABLE

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP C

SUNDAY 16 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ STUTTGART

SLOVENIA DENMARK

SUNDAY 16 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ GELSENKIRCHEN

SERBIA ENGLAND

THURSDAY 20 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ MUNICH

SLOVENIA SERBIA

THURSDAY 20 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ FRANKFURT

DENMARK ENGLAND

TUESDAY 25 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ COLOGNE

ENGLAND SLOVENIA

TUESDAY 25 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ MUNICH

DENMARK SERBIA



FINAL GROUP C TABLE

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1						
2						
3						
4						



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LAST 16 GAME 39

SUNDAY 30 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ COLOGNE

WINNERS GROUP B

3RD GROUP A/D/E/F

LAST 16 GAME 37

SATURDAY 29 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ DORTMUND

WINNERS GROUP A

RUNNERS-UP GROUP C

LAST 16 GAME 41

MONDAY 1 JULY ★ 8PM ★ FRANKFURT

WINNERS GROUP F

3RD GROUP A/B/C

LAST 16 GAME 42

MONDAY 1 JULY ★ 5PM ★ DUSSELDORF

RUNNERS-UP GROUP D

RUNNERS-UP GROUP E

QUARTER-FINAL GAME 45

FRIDAY 5 JULY ★ 5PM ★ STUTTGART

WINNERS GAME 39

WINNERS GAME 37

QUARTER-FINAL GAME 46

FRIDAY 5 JULY ★ 8PM ★ HAMBURG

WINNERS GAME 41

WINNERS GAME 42

SEMI-FINAL GAME 49

TUESDAY 9 JULY ★ 8PM ★ MUNICH

WINNERS GAME 45

WINNERS GAME 46

THE FINALE

SUNDAY 14 JULY ★

WINNERS GAME 49

EURO 2024





GROUP D

SUNDAY 16 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ HAMBURG	
POLAND	NETHERLANDS
MONDAY 17 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ DUSSELDORF	
AUSTRIA	FRANCE
FRIDAY 21 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ BERLIN	
POLAND	AUSTRIA
FRIDAY 21 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ LEIPZIG	
NETHERLANDS	FRANCE
TUESDAY 25 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ BERLIN	
NETHERLANDS	AUSTRIA
TUESDAY 25 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ DORTMUND	
FRANCE	POLAND



FINAL GROUP D TABLE

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP E

MONDAY 17 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ MUNICH	
ROMANIA	UKRAINE
MONDAY 17 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ FRANKFURT	
BELGIUM	SLOVAKIA
FRIDAY 21 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ DUSSELDORF	
SLOVAKIA	UKRAINE
SATURDAY 22 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ COLOGNE	
BELGIUM	ROMANIA
WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ FRANKFURT	
SLOVAKIA	ROMANIA
WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ STUTTGART	
UKRAINE	BELGIUM



FINAL GROUP E TABLE

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1						
2						
3						
4						

GROUP F

TUESDAY 18 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ DORTMUND	
TURKEY	GEORGIA
TUESDAY 18 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ LEIPZIG	
PORTUGAL	CZECH REPUBLIC
SATURDAY 22 JUNE ★ 2PM ★ HAMBURG	
GEORGIA	CZECH REPUBLIC
SATURDAY 22 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ DORTMUND	
TURKEY	PORTUGAL
WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ GELSENKIRCHEN	
GEORGIA	PORTUGAL
WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE ★ 8PM ★ HAMBURG	
CZECH REPUBLIC	TURKEY



FINAL GROUP F TABLE

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
1						
2						
3						
4						

WALLCHART



GAME 51
8PM ★ BERLIN
WINNERS GAME 50

SEMI-FINAL GAME 50
WEDNESDAY 10 JULY ★ 8PM ★ DORTMUND
WINNERS GAME 47 WINNERS GAME 48

4 WINNERS

QUARTER-FINAL GAME 47
SATURDAY 6 JULY ★ 8PM ★ BERLIN
WINNERS GAME 43 WINNERS GAME 44

QUARTER-FINAL GAME 48
SATURDAY 6 JULY ★ 5PM ★ DUSSELDORF
WINNERS GAME 40 WINNERS GAME 38

LAST 16 GAME 43
TUESDAY 2 JULY ★ 5PM ★ MUNICH
WINNERS GROUP E 3RD GROUP A/B/C/D

LAST 16 GAME 44
TUESDAY 2 JULY ★ 8PM ★ LEIPZIG
WINNERS GROUP D RUNNERS-UP GROUP F

LAST 16 GAME 40
SUNDAY 30 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ GELSENKIRCHEN
WINNERS GROUP C 3RD GROUP D/E/F

LAST 16 GAME 38
SATURDAY 29 JUNE ★ 5PM ★ BERLIN
RUNNERS-UP GROUP A RUNNERS-UP GROUP B



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